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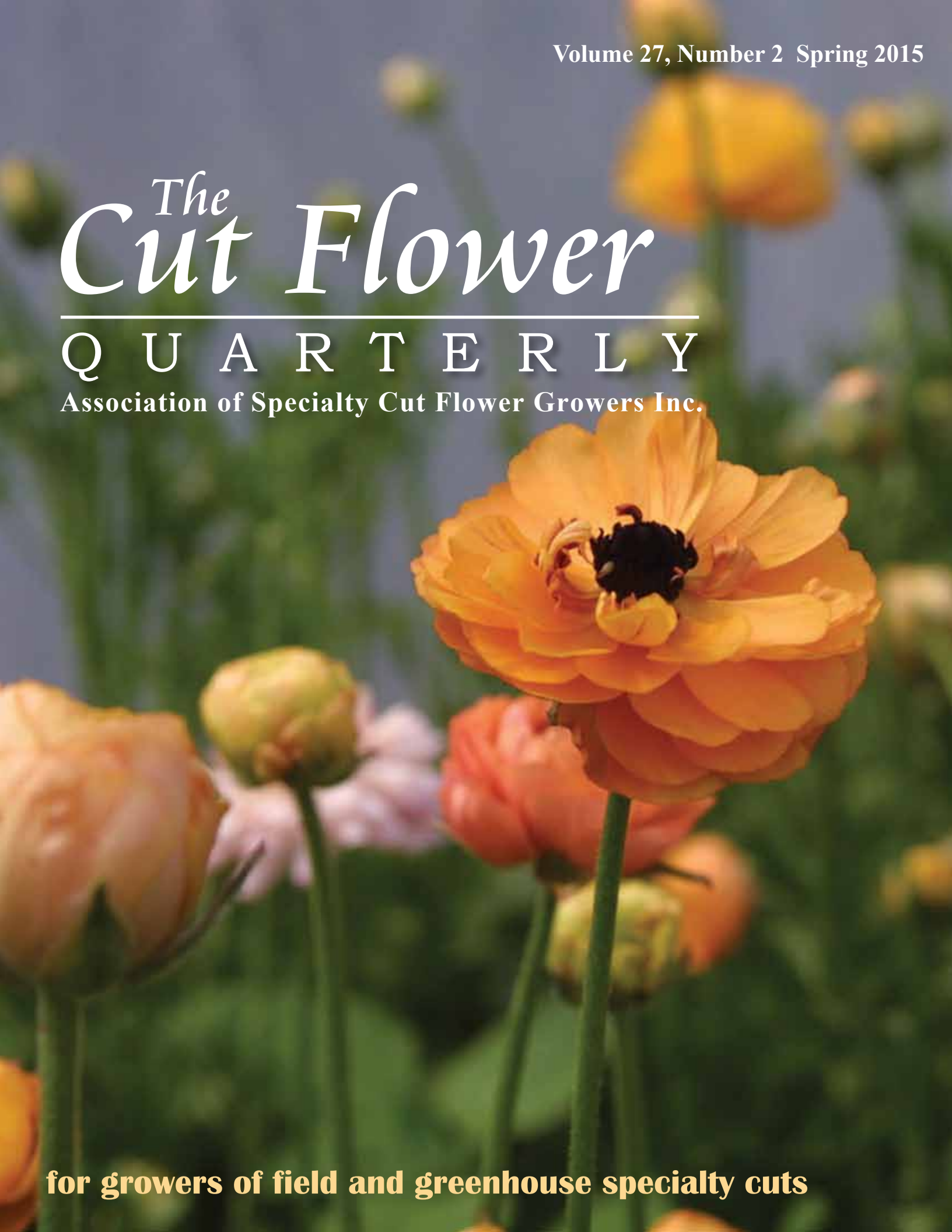
The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.



for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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Fresh from the Texas Hill Country

Frank Arnosky

No matter what part of the country you're growing your flowers, be sure it's clear they're being grown in *this* country.

Within a few weeks of selling our very first bunches of flowers, Pamela and I realized that we needed a label, a brand, something that made our flowers stand out amongst the rest. At that time, back in the early 90's, no one was labeling. Almost all flowers sold, whether they came from the U.S. or overseas, were shipped in clear, unmarked sleeves. Very few sleeves even had a bar code on them. There was almost no concept of "locally grown." Flowers were flowers, right?

So we came up with a slogan: "Fresh from the Texas Hill Country." Incredibly, no one had used this phrase or trademarked it, so we did. We drew up a small oval label, took the idea to a printer in town and had our own farm label made. It was nothing special. (Remember, these were the days before digital imaging.) It said "Fresh from the Texas Hill Country" in the center, "Texas Specialty Cut Flowers" across the top, and had our names "Frank and Pamela Arnosky, Blanco,Texas" along the bottom. One-color blue lettering on a white oval. Like I said, nothin' fancy.

You've Got to be Kidding – You Cut Off Our Label?

We immediately got some strong feedback. While we were floundering about trying to pin down our best market, we sold to the Austin branch of a national floral wholesaler called Bill Doran Company. They asked us to stop putting the label on our sleeves.

Wait, what? Don't you want to identify our flowers as locally grown? "No," they said. "We are having to cut the label off the sleeve before we can sell it."

Cut it off?! Why? They said that their florist customers were getting our flowers, seeing the label and asking for our flowers over the others! They said their customers were telling them not to send them any of that "imported #&@!" (a direct quote). Their customers liked the Texas flowers and were requesting more. We said we would be happy to deliver more flowers, but they said keeping them separate was too much trouble, so they decided it was best not to let anyone know there was a difference. We stopped selling to them.

The response from the grocery stores was just the opposite. In the grocery store world, they are always looking for opportunities to "differentiate" their product offerings from other retailers. Our first grocery store, Central Market, immediately saw the chance to differentiate and jumped at it. They gave us a dedicated display slot and drew up in-house point-of-purchase marketing materials for the display. It was an immediate hit. We went from selling 35 bouquets a week the first week to 350 bouquets a week by the end of the season. In just one store!

Not everyone believed us, though. When I would deliver to the store, I would push a cart full of flowers from the back dock to the display up front and help the staff set up. One day, two women sidled up to the cart and pulled out a bunch. One of them read the label. "Frank and Pamela

The original sleeve label for Texas Specialty Cut Flowers was simple but effective.

Arnosky's current sleeve features a stylized picture of their Big Blue Barn.

Arnosky, huh? Blanco, Texas? Hmmm…" I took the opportunity to introduce myself—the farmer, in person. "Hi, I'm Frank," I said, and stuck out my hand. She sneered and turned to her friend and said, "Yeah, right. And I'm Pamela." They both stalked off. She thought it was a marketing gimmick. I guess we were still ahead of our time.

A Big Blue Barn, or a Big Silver Cargo Plane – Your Choice

Not any more. Things have changed. As we all know, local flowers have become all the rage. Aside from our grocery store business, we are getting several calls a week now for wedding flowers to be picked up at the farm. We have developed our little sticker into a marketing concept that now includes a brand logo, and a big blue barn where people can come out and visit the flower farm.

A couple of things haven't changed though. According to statistics I've read, 85% of the American populace doesn't buy flowers. Period. That figure hasn't changed much over the years. That leaves us with only 15% of the people to try to sell our flowers to. The way I see it, we have a huge, untapped market in those 85% if we could just get a few more of them buying flowers. Any flowers.

The other thing that hasn't changed is that we still have to contend with that "imported #&@!" The Colombian flower growers' association Ascolflores brags that 3 out of 4 flowers sold in the USA come from Colombia. That leaves 1 flower out of 4 to split between the Dutch, the Kenyans, the Ecuadorans, the Mexicans, the Canadians, the Californians, and all the rest of us. The problem is that when Colombia controls the market, they also control the price, and that price is very low. I am still getting the same price for a bunch of sunflowers that I got in 1995, and I feel lucky to have held that price when the pressure in the market is pushing me to sell for even less. It is our local marketing that allows us to maintain even that price.

To that end, the ASCFG is beginning to take steps toward promoting locally-grown flowers and advocating for local flower farms on a national level. For many years, the ASCFG has been primarily an educational organization, and I think it is the best in the business. No other group that I am aware of does so much for the industry helping growers be successful at what they do. The energy and output that come out of our little office in Oberlin, Ohio is really unparalleled.

At the recent ASCFG board meeting in Athens, Georgia, the board decided to take on some projects to help our members market their flowers and to educate consumers about where their flowers come from. Although these projects are still in the planning stages, we have budgeted some funds to work on a Buy Local Flowers campaign that will include a video project about local flowers and flower farms and a possibly an electronic marketing program that will allow members to access a flower database to sell their own flowers though a program such as Shopify.com. We have also budgeted funds to add a social media person to assist the Oberlin office in promoting local flowers through all the various internet media sites now available.

Another project we are looking into is Country of Origin labeling for cut flowers. As it stands now, importers are not required to indicate where the flowers are grown. Unless you label your own flowers, there is no way for a consumer to tell if the flowers they are buying come from overseas. The board believes it would be beneficial to local growers if imported flowers had to be labeled as such, and we are looking into what it would take to push for such labeling. That's a big goal, and it may be beyond the scope of this organization, but it's worth looking into.

These are big steps for the Association, and I am happy that we are making moves in this direction. But we won't lose sight of the true purpose of the group, to grow better growers. We already completed two terrific meetings last month, and have two more fabulous Grower Intensive conferences scheduled this fall, one in Virginia and one in Madison, Wisconsin. We are making plans now for another national conference in the fall of 2016, plus Growers' School that spring. (Yes, these things have to be planned at least two years out!) And Judy and Linda continue to put out the best information in the business through *The Cut Flower Quarterly.*

In the meantime, label your flowers! We always say nothing leaves our farm without a label. We want people to get home, remove the sleeve and see our name on it. We hand out postcards with our logo on it. We put up signs and provide ready-to-print images to our retailers. The more they see our name, the more they remember us. No one can promote your farm like you can. You are the best at what you do. Don't let your customers forget that!

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My Ode to the Marigold

Joan Thorndike
Le Mera Gardens

A favorite of American gardens is in hot demand for Indian weddings and Mexican celebrations.

We have grown the large African style marigold for years and years; our fields would be incomplete without that huge swath of color slicing right down the field. We've seen them change names, become "improved," larger, better, best color, most vigorous — they are still the quintessential, flamboyant, colorful big-head marigold which smells just so much like a marigold.

Every year we wait with anticipation for the first flush to come on sometime between the last week in June and the first week in July. It may seem strange that I should know that date so well; after all, we grow upwards of 150 species of cut flowers, but June is when we get our first enquiry for marigold heads to make celebration garlands.

Our local ashram welcomes the arrival of it spiritual teacher toward the end of June, always with festive garlands of marigolds, and a few days later it hosts a weeklong festival. Praying for the row of marigolds to bloom in time starts in earnest among the ashram's disciples by mid June—will we be able to supply them with the first 500 marigold heads in time for the arrival of their guru?

From Weddings to The Day of the Dead

Marigolds are imported to the United States from Mexico and from India (can you imagine that kind of travel?) by the hundreds of thousands to satisfy the market needs of East Indian and Nepali weddings, of Mexican dance festivals, and of various prayer ceremonies. The residents of our Rogue Valley's ashram love our marigolds because they can see the plants from the road, and because we give our flowers the organic treatment which this ashram simply calls love. The blooms look healthy and lively, good stuff to bring into a hallowed space.

Do we sell marigolds to flower shops? Well, we try to, but I probably sell fewer than a dozen 10-stem bunches in a year—marigolds smell, don't you know. We do cut hundreds of stems three times a week for our market and supermarket mixed bouquets, with never a customer complaint.

Marigolds are a powerful flower and they "make" the bouquet. However, outweighing our growing marigolds for our own florists, markets and supermarkets, the demand from other parts of the country for marigold heads is astounding—a dozen phone calls per week at certain times of the growing season! We don't ship flowers beyond the state of Oregon. As intermittent shippers we get no preferential price or breaks to ship, so the cost to the customer is huge and most often ridiculous— one hundred percent the cost of the flowers, if not more.

Every once in a while I succumb to an out-of-state plea for marigold heads and then I get to test this assertion, which is a mistake. In mid August last year I sent an 18-pound box of marigold heads to a gentleman in northern Washington State. He desperately wanted organic flowers for his prayer ceremony because, as he put it, he prays over them, he touches them, others touch them. It cost $199 for FedEx to deliver that box overnight, very close to the actual cost of the flowers. I kept the text message he sent me when the flowers arrived: "Received the flowers; thank you, they are absolutely beautiful!" That was comforting.

Never Enough Marigolds!

From July onwards I spend much time every week directing buyers to the ASCFG website to search for a grower in their state, in a neighboring state, in their corner of the United States. As a membership we don't grow enough marigolds!!! I particularly encourage any of you flower growers living within any reasonable distance of an Indian, Nepali, or Mexican/Aztec community to include marigolds in your mix and let it be known in your area.

Marigolds are representative of the sun in Indian weddings, they symbolize brightness and positive energy for the couple, a divine blessing in the form of a living flower.

Look online for any business near or near-ish you that caters to Southeast Asian weddings, look at Pinterest, look at The Knot; Indians in particular go BIG with weddings! Some businesses catering to Indian weddings will buy thousands of marigold heads, by the pound in fact, and for the right price they will buy from you every week. Most import them, a shame when we could be supplying American grown.

These cultures are a really fun customer base; they have a lovely lilt to their voice, and always a story to tell.

Plan on a minimum of two rows, planted with a month in between. When the stems of the first row become weak and production slows down, your second row will have come into bloom, but you should take a hedge trimmer, big shears, hand clippers, whatever tool best suits the scale of your operation to cut back that first row. By autumn the first row will be back with a healthy, sturdy second flush.

Joan Thorndike is the owner of LeMera Gardens, Ashland, Oregon.
Contact her at joan@lemeragardens.com

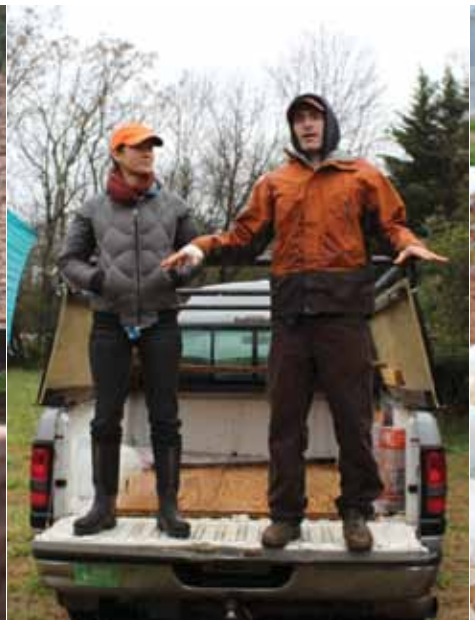
Tanis Clifton brought southern hospitality to the event.

Donna Mills demonstrated her wreath-making ability.

At Woodland Gardens, Celia Barss explains their farming philosophy.

Attendees saw perfect plantings of tomatoes and other vegetables, as well as flowers.

Jennie Love created a design using locally-grown material.



Mandy and Steve O'Shea welcomed wet attendees to their farm.

3 Porch anemones ready for spring harvest.

Continental Floral Greens lived up to its name

The group enjoyed lunch with millions of gerberas at Kitayama Brothers.

Paula Rice checks out plug flats at Headstart Nursery.

Golden State's calla varieties were endless.

Carole Smith shows how Headstart uses Ellepots.

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Skyfields Flower Farm

Groton, Massachusetts

By Megan Bame

Inspired by her own children, an energetic Nancy Van Nest carved a farm out of a rocky Massachusetts meadow, and supports mental health organizations at the same time.

In many ways Skyfields Flower Farm is like many others. It's a young venture started as a potential second career by a woman who has dreamed of working on a farm as a relaxing reprieve. Yet, in so many ways, the deeper truth behind each of those generalities makes this venture like no other.

A Flower Farm with a Mission

First and foremost, Skyfields Flower Farm is not the typical business venture. It was founded with a mission to donate all profits to organizations that provide for the care of, and work toward a cure for, individuals living with autism or with schizophrenia. As one might guess, the causes are close to the heart of founder, Nancy Van Nest, who is married with four children, including 15-year-old son Nils, who has autism, and 28-year-old Cameron, diagnosed with schizophrenia at age 19. Nancy says, "The number of people affected by autism and schizophrenia continues to grow, and these children and adults, and their parents, often have nowhere to turn for help or services. We need to do whatever we can to support the organizations that do help."

While Nils is lucky to live in a wonderful group home run by health care provider Devereux, the family supports Cameron in his own living quarters, while he continues to pursue his goal of a college degree. This family knows firsthand how difficult it can be to find quality, affordable ongoing support and services for these children, much less adolescents and adults. For that reason, the Nashoba Learning Group Adult Program is Nancy's charity of choice for autism issues. The Nashoba Learning Group (NLG) has made a commitment that any child in its school program (ages 3-22), which includes Nils, will have a place in the NLG Adult Program, allowing him or her to continue to learn and work and live within a support system that will meet each of their needs and help them continue to make progress.

While not as much attention has been brought to schizophrenia, Nancy observes that it is on its way to becoming a "hot topic" in the public's awareness of mental illness. The organization she donated to most recently relative to schizophrenia was Bring Change 2 Mind, which is a national anti-stigma campaign aimed at raising awareness and removing misconceptions about mental illness.

When her family moved to the farm property, 6.5 acres in Groton, Massachusetts, Nancy knew she wanted to find a way to put the land and existing barns to good use furthering fundraising efforts for both autism and schizophrenia. She actually researched many different farm models including alpacas, vegetable farms, sheep and goats, trees, landscape shrubs, and others. But when she stumbled across cut flowers, she says, "It immediately excited me." With some flower gardening experience and even some courses in perennial growing under her belt, she set about learning more when, "I found the ASCFG website and purchased, *The Flower Farmer*, which I read from cover to cover. Several times."

She admits, "My friends and family were certainly dubious of my ability to pull this off, considering my many other obligations, but I just kept moving forward, finding the time here and there, reading, planning and ultimately buying the seeds and figuring out how and when to plant them." She adds, "Winter in New England is useful that way!" Now, the entire family embraces the endeavor and spreads the word about the farm and its mission.

Two Quick Years of Very Hard Work

In 2013, she started from scratch by rototilling about 10 long rows for cut flowers right out of a grassy, rocky meadow. She recalls, "It was no picnic. I felt like an early New England farmer, scratching a farm out of nothing." After Nancy and her daughter Jorie picked up "what seemed like a million rocks," they formed raised beds and planted about 20 varieties that spring just to see if they could grow a quality cut flower product. "Then," she says, "suddenly, it was July and everything started coming up at once, and beautifully." They contacted a local florist, "just to gauge interest," and ended up selling almost everything to her that summer. Though the learning curve was steep, Skyfields Flower Farm realized a profit and was able to make donations at the end of its first season.

Last year Nancy tripled the planting area and planted over 100 varieties, again, many just to ensure they could be grown well. She invested in a tractor and a cooler setup in the barn. Recognizing a need for additional labor, she kept Jorie at work, enlisted eldest child Zachary when time allowed, and coordinated a summer internship for a student at the Stockbridge School of Agriculture, Sharee Broomstein. Nancy reflects, "We worked harder and learned even more."

They established a florist route mostly along Route 2 and into Boston. In several ways, with time being the biggest factor, it seemed the florist route might not be the best fit for Nancy. She laments, "Flower growing is feasible and cutting can be done. But flower delivery by truck is a big challenge for us. It is very time consuming, and if you miss the florist when you arrive, get stuck in traffic, or the florists decide they don't have need for the product that week, you have wasted a lot of time and product." In her third season, she plans to test an Internet concept as a way to potentially sell a higher percentage of what the farm grows.

Nancy plans to ship free product to five test customers, who will, in exchange, send her photos and feedback on quality, longevity, packaging and arrival status. Nancy says, "I don't want to go into Internet sales, until I know with 100% certainty that our products will arrive in good condition and be long lasting at the receiver's end." While she appreciates that "local" is a selling point for many specialty cut flower farms, she feels that there is a hole in the market for American-grown and chemical-free. A hole she'd like to fill, particularly via online ordering and direct shipping.

The farm's annual crop selection has included sunflowers, zinnia, celosia, Queen Anne's lace, ageratum, basil, baby's breath, dianthus, dahlia, lisianthus, snapdragons, statice, bupleurum and many others. Perennials include coneflower, veronica, lavender, peonies, coreopsis, scabiosa, and yarrow. This year they will focus on species that will ship well. In addition, they plan to grow and dry more herbs to extend the season, including medicinal herbs. There are ferns and many wild shrubs on the property that provide fresh greenery. So far, they only have a few woodies (hydrangea, forsythia, and dogwood), but Nancy would like to expand that selection, since they seem may be a better fit with her time challenges (less tilling, planting, and weeding).

If You Want Something Done, Ask a Busy Person

Nancy's time on the farm is challenged by the fact that she is an attorney and has been practicing law for more than 25 years. She currently devotes her work exclusively to projects in the waste recycling industry, helping build facilities which recycle and reuse waste streams from municipalities and businesses. Most recently she is working on food waste-to-energy projects, in which food waste is used to create biogas, which can in turn be used to produce both electricity and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for trucks. Working for companies all over the U.S. allows her to locate her office right in the barn. This allows her to oversee things on the farm while at work in her office. She handles as much farm work as she can squeeze in on weekends and through the summer; she can cut flowers in the early mornings and evenings. She's found, "Since I have no commute, and a flexible schedule, sometimes I even run out to do a farm task at lunchtime."

Recognizing that any farming venture would require five to, perhaps even, ten years of experience before shifting to full-time, she has pushed through the challenges to get these first few seasons under her belt without putting income pressure on herself. She admits the florist route wasn't profitable last year, but she still made a donation. She's determined to figure out the right market for her flowers, but knows that marketing and building clientele take time. One can only imagine that if the mission of Skyfields Flower Farm were effectively communicated locally, regionally, or perhaps even nationally, every harvested stem would be purchased and awareness raised about autism and schizophrenia.

While looking out her office window in late February at eight feet of snow, and drifts of more than fifteen feet, Nancy suspects planting will be significantly delayed this year, as late as mid-May. She shares, "Flower farming is very hard physical work, but for me it is a great distraction from the many cares and stresses of daily life, and I like that we are doing good by selling fresh, chemical-free flowers and herbs, making donations and bringing a little happiness to others. The endeavor is very satisfying for me."

Developing "Bud Sticks" for Hybrid Lilies

Bill Miller and Neil Mattson

In response to requests from U.S. lily growers, we have been working to develop "bud sticks" or "timing tools" to predict flowering dates based on bud size for a range of hybrid lily cultivars. This article will present a brief background on what we have done, illustrate the results, and provide a link for further information for timing 30 cultivars of Asiatic, oriental, LA, and OT–hybrid lilies.

Background

Accurate prediction of the date a lily bud will flower is important for proper timing for holiday or special occasion sales. When stems are marketed daily (as with the Dutch auction) it might not be important if a crop flowers today or 4 days from now. But for holiday markets, special events like weddings, or for specific promotions, accurate prediction of the flower date many weeks in advance is important so you can deliver a stem at the right specification (1 open bud, 2 colored buds, etc.) at the right time.

When grown at a given temperature, time to flower from a specified development stage is remarkably constant. In the case of lilies, bud length is easily measured and is an excellent way to monitor development. If you grow a lily cultivar in a constant environment, a 3.7 cm long bud (for example) will always flower in a specified number of days in the future. If the plant is grown warmer, the plant will flower faster, and if grown cooler, it will be slower. Thus, temperature is the key environmental factor that regulates flowering of lilies. Light does play a role, especially if higher light levels warms the plant above the air temperature, but temperature is the most important factor.

Because plants must flower for Easter, the potted Easter lily is one of the most highly studied floriculture plants in terms of growth rate and temperature. Timing of 'Nellie White' (the main cultivar used for Easter pots) is controlled by adjusting temperature so that "visible bud" falls 5-6 weeks before sales date (it is well known from research and practical experience that an Easter lily at "visible bud" will flower in 6 weeks if grown at 15.6C (60F) night temperature).

After visible bud, in the 5-6 weeks before flowering, a long-standing tool called a "bud stick" is used. Essentially, the bud stick is held up to the bud, and marks indicate that a given length bud will take a specific number of days to open as a particular temperature.

However, given the many groups and cultivars of lilies, it is clear that "bud sticks" need to be developed for individual varieties. The purpose of this ongoing work is to develop timing tools for a number of cultivars of hybrid lilies, including many grown as cut flowers.

What We Did

A range of lily cultivars was grown over the past five years at Cornell. We planted 8-9 bulbs into lily export crates in Lambert LM-111 mix and grew the plants with normal care. For each cultivar, when the bottom (oldest) buds became long enough to measure without greatly disturbing the young leaves surrounding them, crates were moved to 4 or 5 greenhouses at temperatures. Buds were tagged and bud length measured 2-3 times per week until they flowered. Knowing the flower date, it was possible to calculate the number of days to open for all the bud length measurements collected.

Ultimately, a large database of days to flower and bud length was developed for each cultivar and temperature. These numbers were plotted onto a graph, and equations relating bud length and days to flower across the temperatures were calculated. I'll spare additional details on the "sausage making"

aspect of the work! Ultimately, a simple table showing days to open at different temperatures for various bud lengths was developed. Note this table is presenting temperature at the 24-hour, average daily temperature (ADT).

What We Found

The table shows results for an LA ('Samur'), an oriental ('Sorbonne') and an OT ('Tabledance'). First, you can see that growing the plants at a warmer temperature greatly reduces the days to flower (for example, if you grow 'Sorbonne' at 72F versus 61F, you will reduce the time to open a 0.8-inch long bud by 17 days (45 days at the cool temperature versus 28 days at the warmer temperature). You can see differences between cultivars. For example, a 0.8-inch long 'Samur' bud takes 33 days to flower at 61F, but the 'Sorbonne' bud takes 45 days. And, obviously, smaller buds take longer to open than larger buds (example: 'Tabledance', 1.6-inch buds open in 37 days at 61F, but 4-inch buds take only 8 days).

An extensive presentation of data for 30 hybrid lily cultivars (both cut and pot varieties) can be found at http://www.flowerbulbs.cornell.edu/forcing/lily_timing.html

Growers can make use of this information in a number of ways. First, a deeper understanding of the relation of temperature and growth rate can be useful in its own right. To make full use of this information, growers would need greenhouses with good temperature monitoring equipment which would allow easy calculation of daily averages (preferably accumulated averages).

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Days to open for buds of varying sizes, at different temperatures, for 3 hybrid lily cultivars. Temperature is the 24 hour daily average.

Bud length, cm. (inches)	Temperature (degrees C)	Samur	Sorbonne	Tabledance
2 (0.8 in)	57	40.0	54.8	59.8
2	61	33.1	45.0	50.0
2	64	27.7	37.3	42.3
2	68	23.9	31.7	36.5
2	72	21.8	28.2	32.6
2	75	21.2	26.8	30.7
4 (1.6 in)	57	21.4	33.2	44.7
4	61	18.4	28.0	37.3
4	64	15.9	23.8	31.3
4	68	14.1	20.5	26.9
4	72	12.9	18.2	23.9
4	75	12.3	16.9	22.5
6 (2.4 in)	57	9.1	17.5	30.6
6	61	8.5	15.5	26.0
6	64	7.8	13.6	22.2
6	68	7.2	12.0	19.0
6	72	6.7	10.7	16.5
6	75	6.2	9.6	14.6
8 (3.1 in)	57	3.2	7.7	17.4
8	61	3.4	7.4	16.4
8	64	3.4	6.9	14.9
8	68	3.4	6.3	12.8
8	72	3.2	5.6	10.3
8	75	2.9	4.7	7.2
10 (3.9 in)	57	---	3.7	5.2
10	61	---	3.7	8.3
10	64	---	3.6	9.4
10	68	---	3.4	8.4
10	72	---	3.0	5.4
10	75	---	2.5	0.3

Karo Syrup, Heinz Vinegar, and Clorox

Gay Smith

"Shiny and new gets you only so far before you start to miss the things that once made life magic. Remember fragrance in flowers? Remember seasons? And regional differences? And textural gems? When I make a cold call on a high–end grocer with a load of the highest quality locally–grown cuts in buckets, fully hydrated and never having known otherwise, and the buyer gushes, "This is what I need!" I know I'm in the right business, in the right place, at the right time. And the right place is wherever a U.S. grower is growing, and the right time is now."

Joe Schmitt, Fair Field Flowers, Madison, Wisconsin

So true! Who doesn't miss flower fragrances, seasonality and the charm of regional differences? But what I don't miss are antiquated attitudes about postharvest solutions. In the 1970s few, if any, wholesale buyers ever asked growers about what postharvest treatments were used. Back then tap water was the common holding solution.

The first time I recall postharvest awareness was when growers started labeling carnation sleeves "STS treated". More than forty years of research has unequivocally proven that most flowers last longer when placed in appropriate chemical solutions compared to stems placed in plain water, and consumer marketing research documents vase life as the most important measurement of value. Yet flower solutions are often considered an expense—even a frivolous luxury—instead of an insurance policy for repeat customers. No doubt, various household chemicals mimic the effects of commercial solutions, but homemade cocktails discount the reliability of tested formulas, ingredient ratios, product stability and consistent results.

"Homemade" Doesn't Always Mean "Effective"

To date, no commercial flower chemical company has been able to find an ingredient to consistently control microbial growth for a sustained period, and be approved by OMRI (the Organic Materials Review Institute). This condition puts organic growers (and flower solution companies) in a tough situation leading to questions like these: "Wondering if anyone has some homemade recipes that work?" or "I was interviewing a mass market retailer who told me that she tells her customers not to use preservative in the tulips, just fresh water."

There are plenty of examples of homemade flower food recipes on the web. A quick search turned up this one from University of Massachusetts, Amherst: "Mix one can of a lemon-lime citrus soda (not diet) with three cans of water, and add 1.2 mL of bleach. The University of Massachusetts Amherst recommends changing the nutrient solution daily."

No doubt, various household chemicals mimic the effects of commercial solutions, but homemade cocktails discount the reliability of tested formulas, ingredient ratios, product stability and consistent results.

Martha Stewart has a nifty YouTube video showing how to mix Karo corn syrup, Heinz vinegar and Clorox for vases.

Teleflora provides this information on their website, "A floral life extender packet

Delphinium is particularly affected by ethylene.

Sweet peas before (left) and after (right) ethylene exposure.

is typically included with your floral delivery. It is basically sugar that helps keep the bacteria count in the water low. An aspirin, (not ibuprofen), works just as well. Aspirin seems to lengthen the life of the flowers." Did the inaccuracies about sugar, bacteria and aspirin jump out at you?

Why commercial formulas are such a turnoff to everyone in the chain is a mystery. Simple comparison tests of water, homebrews and commercial solutions tell the story. Even the reliance on bleach is surprising since it is so short-lived compared to more stable, slow-release chlorine formulas. Prudence in managing cost of goods is definitely important, but it makes no sense to grow fantastic products and skimp on postharvest. Postharvest solutions are the tipping point when it comes to vase life potential. Research has proven that even if only one segment of the chain uses some postharvest treatment, it is still better than no treatment at all.

A good seed catalogue provides information on disease resistance, productivity, light requirements, germination rates, planting density, and flowering cycles, but often, not too much information about postharvest needs and/or vase longevity.

Prudence in managing cost of goods is definitely important, but it makes no sense to grow fantastic products and skimp on postharvest.

Why not? Ethylene sensitivity is one example of critical information growers need. Ethylene exposure kills ethylene-sensitive flowers fast. The antidote is to treat blooms with STS or 1MCP. If STS is not registered for use in your state or you have no interest in using 1-MCP, don't grow super-sensitive species, delphinium for example. There are many ethylene-sensitive reference lists online. Asclepias, dicentra, foxglove, phlox, scabiosa, and veronica appeared on the list I found—all favorites cited in recent ASCFG Bulletin Board posts.

Water quality is another important consideration. Tap waters can have a huge difference in chemical compositions and pH. Usually tap water is neutral with a pH between 6 and 8. Generally speaking, water with a low pH (4-5) is much better for cut flowers because uptake is improved, air bubbles dissolve, and micro-organism growth is limited. Lilac, viburnum, and other woodies benefit from an even slightly lower pH (3.5-4) to boost flow.

Cut foliage benefits from postharvest care, too. Although sugar can sometimes stimulate leaf yellowing, foliage still needs clean water for good uptake. Cotinus, for example, responds well to hydration solution based on quaternary ammonium compounds rather than solutions based on aluminum sulfate or citric acid. Dutch growers also add Agral (a horticultural surfactant) to enhance uptake.

Stress robs days from vase life, and wears many hats including poor temperature management, wrong cut stage, under-dosed solutions, rough handling, dull tools, dehydration and exposure to ethylene. Lowering stress maximizes vase potential which keeps customers coming back for more.

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Three Findings from the SAF Pest and Production Management Conference

Stanton Gill

At the recent Society of American Florists' Pest and Production Management Conference in Orlando, I presented some results of research conducted at the University of Maryland, and thought I would share some others as well.

The "Big Gorilla Disease" for Basil Growers

Basil is a huge money-maker for many horticulture operations. One large New Jersey greenhouse said their demand for sweet basil exceeds their ability to produce it in New Jersey, and they're now looking at buying 15-20 acres of greenhouse in Florida to grow more basil. Attendees surveyed at the SAF meeting said that sweet basil is the most in demand.

Margery Daughtrey of Cornell University spoke on the "big gorilla disease" of basil: downy mildew.

Downy mildew of basil is known to be carried in seed. The trick is finding a seed producer who sells clean seed. Margery and her team found that if the seed is treated with steam, the downy mildew can be killed without damaging the seed. Hot water treatment doesn't work because of troublesome seed exudates. She mentioned one Dutch company that can supply steam-treated seed called Enza Zaden.

Downy mildew sporulation on underside of basil leaf.

The long-range way to deal with this disease is to use resistant varieties. There is one called 'Eleonora' which Margery called a good first try, but we still have a ways to go to find a really good downy mildew-resistant cultivar. Some promising new ones are under development at Rutgers.

Margery suggested that fungicides be applied preventatively. In greenhouses the materials to use would be Revus, Ranman, or phosphorus acid fungicides such as FosPhite or K-Phite. Other materials registered for use on basil outdoors are not labeled for greenhouse use, but the materials available for the greenhouse will do the job, unless you grow organically.

One of the physical controls you can use is to keep the relatively humidity under 85%, which can be a real challenge later in the spring and early summer when greenhouse humidities tend to rise.

Downy mildew leaf yellowing and sporulation on basil leaf.

Margery mentioned that in Israel researchers are trying a novel way of dealing with this disease by using incandescent light bulbs suspended over basil, kept on overnight. In the first couple of weeks after germination they are able to protect 96-100% of the basil from downy mildew. In the following weeks this beneficial impact from nighttime lighting drops off gradually because the canopies fill in and much of the leaf area is no longer directly exposed to light.

Margery also emphasized the importance of regular monitoring, and destroying infested plants immediately. Growers producing basil as microgreens for use in salad bars must really stay on top of monitoring with a fast-turning crop like this.

Banker Plants and Biological Control

Lance Osborne of the University of Florida presented a session describing several banker plant systems for growers. One was new to me—using papayas as banker plants. Lance, Ashton Dickey, and Cindy McKenzie published a paper in 2011 about infesting papaya plants with papaya whitefly. This pest limits its feeding activity to papaya and plants in its family, which are not generally grown in a greenhouse environment. Lance told me he purchased papaya fruit from the grocery store (easy to do in Florida where he is located), removed the seeds, and started them in pots. The papaya plant is then infested with whitefly, *Bemisia tabaci*.

Papayas used as banker plants infested with whitefly.

The parasitic wasps *Encarsia sophia* (*transvena*) are released on the plants, and the females sting the sessile stage of the whitefly and lay eggs inside. The banker plant is then moved out into the greenhouse, and the parasitic wasp adults migrate out into the greenhouse to search for and sting sessile stages of whiteflies. Biological supply houses are now investigating what is required to ship out papaya whitefly to states other than Florida, where it already exists. Once this hurdle is crossed we will have a potentially very cool banker plant system to deal with whitefly in greenhouses.

Grass Mites Useful for Two-spotted Spider Mite Control

One of the major pests damaging greenhouse plants is the two-spotted spider mite. Lance Osborne said that in Florida, growers raise field corn plants in pots and infest the foliage with grass mites that feed only on monocots such as corn and grasses. Once the mite population is established, two predatory mites, *Amblyseius californicus* and *Phytoseilus persimilis*, are released on to the corn plants. They feed on the grass mites, reproduce, and when the banker plant is moved into the greenhouse, migrate off the corn and search for spider mites on the crop. Grass mites are found in many states so shipping them from biological supply houses should be a smaller hurdle to get over.

Stanton Gill is Extension Specialist in I.P.M. University of Maryland Extension and Professor, Landscape Technology Program, Montgomery College. Contact him at sgill@umd.edu

in the alley

in the alley behind the florist's shop,
a huge white garbage truck was parked and idling.
in a cloud of exhaust, two men in coveralls
and stocking caps, their noses dripping,
were picking through the florist's dumpster
and each had selected a fistful of roses.

as i walked past, they gave me a furtive,
conspiratorial nod, perhaps sensing
that i, too (though in my business suit and tie)
am a devotee of garbage - an aficionado
of the wilted, the shopworn, and the free-
and that i had for days been searching
beneath the heaps of worn-out, faded words
to find this brief bouquet for you.

~ ted kooser

Megan Bame

Methods for Ethylene Control: Nanotechnology

Note: In the last issue, three classical approaches to ethylene control were summarized: genetic strategies, environmental strategies, and chemical strategies. The use of nanotechnology is a relatively new, innovative approach that shows promising application in postharvest care of cut flowers.

Ethylene is a plant growth regulator involved in a variety of physiological processes including germination, growth, floral initiation and opening, senescence, abscission and fruit ripening. Responses to ethylene vary widely by plant species. Much is known about ethylene at the biochemical and genetic levels and numerous strategies have been developed to reduce ethylene production or inhibit its action to prolong flower postharvest performance.

Nanotechnology is defined as the design, characterization, production and application of structures, devises and systems by controlling the shape and size at the nanometer scale. Nanoparticles and nanoporous materials can be used to carry ethylene action inhibitors, control growth and development of microorganisms and introduce a new generation of packaging.

Postharvest Ethylene Detection and Removal

Ethylene gas sensors are used in the fruit and vegetable industry to detect and monitor the concentration of ethylene in the environment. Tin dioxide is the most common nano-material used for detection in ethylene sensors, though other metal oxides are also used. These materials are used in resistor-based devices, where their conductivity increases or decreases as an effect of the exposure to ethylene concentrations. Gas sensors containing nanostructures, such as nanowires, identify the odorant mimicking natural olfaction and estimate its concentration. This device is called an e-nose. Changes in the postharvest environment can be made in appropriate response to the information provided by the e-nose. While the application of ethylene gas sensors could be useful in the cut flower industry, particularly in storage rooms of large growers and wholesale markets, a cost-benefit analysis needs to be done to evaluate whether the gain in vase life would compensate the extra cost of monitoring and removal.

Packaging technologies are another means of maintaining a desirable atmosphere. Nano-scale fillers can be incorporated in plastic films making them more impermeable to ethylene. Nano-components might be used to create ethylene-scavenging bags or a nanoparticle-promoted absorbent matrices might be included in traditional packaging to remove ethylene. Nano-catalytic degradation where the organic contaminant is actually destroyed is also being researched. Titanium dioxide has been the focus of light-activated photocatalytic degradation, but the constant need for UV light (whether natural or artificial) is a limiting factor. Research is still in the early stages for the floriculture industry, but prototypes have demonstrated potential economic feasibility for commercial cut flower applications.

Ethylene Action Inhibition

Cyclodextrin nanosponges (CD-NSs) were initially used for removing persistent organic pollutants in water purification. They have since been adapted for use in cosmetics, medicine and agriculture. As a postharvest delivery system, CD-NSs have been successful in harnessing the gaseous 1-MCP. Not only did research indicate 1-MCP in a CD-NS prolonged vase life (by 5 days, compared to gaseous 1-MCP), it also controlled damage from Botrytis cinerea. While gaseous 1-MCP is highly unstable and reactive, in inclusion in a CD-NS appears to stabilize it and preserve its ethylene inhibition properties. While more research is required, the 1-MCP CD-NS is a promising user-friendly formulation that may be economically viable in the the cut flower industry, offering prolonged vaselife and control of fungal diseases.

Scariot, V., R. Paradiso, H. Rogers, and S. De Pascale, 2014. Ethylene control in cut flowers: Classical and innovative approaches. Postharvest Biology and Technology*, 97 pp. 83-92.*

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Greenhouse Gladiolus Production

Researchers in Brazil evaluated irrigation needs and nitrogen fertilization on greenhouse-grown gladiolus. Using the variety 'White Friendship', which requires 60 to 65 days of cultivation, two bulbs per pot were planted 12 cm deep. Fertilization treatments consisted of five doses of nitrogen (0, 30, 60, 90, 120 mg/dm3), were divided and applied at 20, 31 and 40 days after planting. Five levels of water replacement in the soil were tested (50%, 75%, 100%, 125% and 150% of the volume of field capacity water replacement). A software, Soil Water Retention Curves, was used to calculate the volume of water replacement for each treatment. Assessment of the growth and yield occurred at 46 and 76 days after planting. Other data collected included leaf count, plant height, length of stem and floral spike, number of flowers, flower diameter, number of days to bolting and number of days to flower.

Using a graph to display the relationship between plant height and water replacement levels, the level 132% resulted in a maximum plant height (94.5 cm or 37 in). A minimum water replacement level of 75% was required to achieve stem lengths within commercial standards.

The maximum number of flowers (12) was observed on the quadratic curve at 136%, with a minimum level of 100% suggested for best quality. Similarly, maximum flower diameter (8.75 cm or 3.44 in) was obtained at a water replacement level of 130%. The minimum number of days to flowering (62 days) was determined to be at a level of 134%.

As for the nitrogen part of the experiment, only the variable floral stem dry mass demonstrated a significant response among the treatment groups. Stems with no nitrogen applied had nearly 20% less dry mass compared to stems that received 120 mg/dm3 nitrogen.

de Andrade Porto, R., M. Koetz, E.M. Bonfim-Silva, A. Castilho Polizel, T.J.A. da Silva, 2014. Effect of water replacement levels and ditrogen fertilization on growth and production of gladiolus in a greenhouse. Agricultural Water Management, *131 pp. 50-56.*

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Dave Dowling, Ednie Flower Bulb

This is a series dealing with the supply side of the cut flower industry. Suppliers and customers are welcome to contact Dave with ideas and topic suggestions for future issues.

It's hard to believe that it's been a year since I transitioned from flower farmer to bulb supplier. It's been a big change, but one that is working out fine. I'm still in the "flower business" and involved with the great group of ASCFG members. I've learned a lot in the past year, and there is still much to learn.

A few reminders to you flower farmers out there. First and foremost is to try to order early. This helps ensure you get what you need, and it allows the suppliers to fill your orders. Plugs are probably the most important item to order early. It takes several months to grow cut flower plugs to the correct size for transplanting into your fields, greenhouses, and tunnels. Lisianthus is one of the slowest-growing plants in the plug stage that cut flower growers use. It can take four months from placing an order to the plugs growing to size and being delivered to you. Don't wait until it's time to plant to look for plugs. You'll have a very limited selection, if you can even find what you're looking for. A good guide is to order plugs six months before you need them. This is often soon after the current year's flowers have bloomed. What better time to order your lisianthus plugs than right after they have bloomed when you can still remember what colors sold well, and what varieties you had in excess?

Perennials and woodies should also be ordered before you need them. Sure, you can order from availability lists that suppliers send out, but often the best, most desired varieties are already sold out before the list gets to you. A perennial grower may grow 200 flats of *Phlox paniculata* 'David' each year. It's not unusual for a large customer to buy all of them to grow potted perennials for the large chain stores. The same goes for woody cut material. Those 'Limelight' hydrangeas, lilac, and curly willows you grow for cutting also look great in the landscape and are often bought up for landscape use. Know that there are other, non-cut flower growers out there trying to buy the same things you need as a cut flower grower. The big growers plan a year or more in advance. Order early before they buy all the good stuff.

Fall-planted bulbs should be ordered by midsummer. Don't wait until October to look for tulips, daffodils, ranunculus, etc. You will be disappointed in the selection available at the last minute. When buying bulbs, purchasing full crates will get you the best price per bulb. If you can't use 500 of the same tulip variety, think of ways you can spread out the harvest so they can be sold over a 4-6 week period. You can grow some in a tunnel to get them ready 2-3 weeks earlier, and plant some in an area of your farm that is the last place to warm up in the spring. Think of those places where the snow was the last to melt. Maybe the shady north side of a building or the area along the tree line where snow drifted deep and melted last because of the shade from the trees. Tulips planted in these area may bloom a week or more later than one planted in a warmer area of the farm. You can also hold tulips in your cooler to extend the "season" at least another week. Doing all this can spread out one crate of 500 tulips over a five-week period. For smaller growers, selling 100 a week is much easier than selling 500 all in one week.

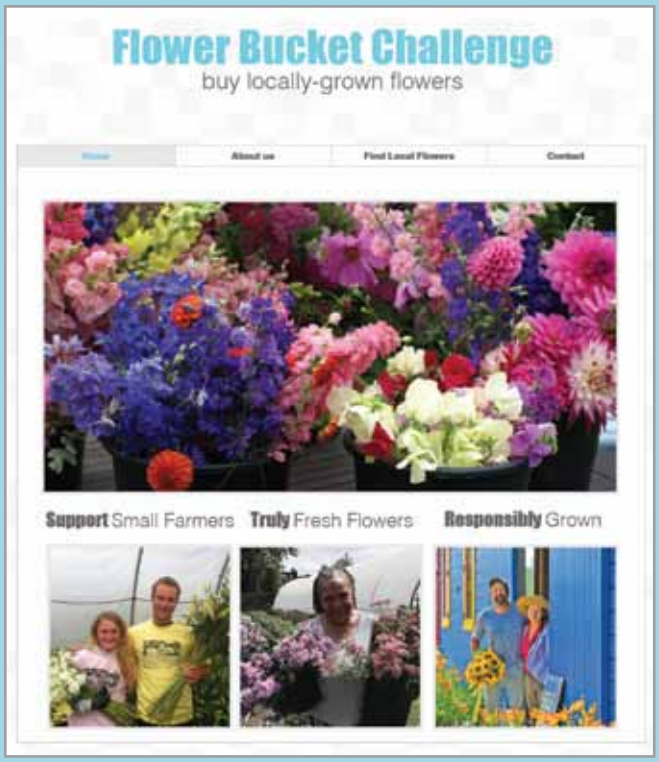
Another item that should be planned and ordered in advance is your irrigation supplies. Having an irrigation system in place before you need it is the best insurance you can buy. No professional flower farmer should think he or she can be successful without having some kind of irrigation system. You may need it only a couple times a year, and some years hardly at all, but when you're going into your second month without rain and you're dragging hoses around your fields, you'll wish you could just turn on the drip tape and go do something else with your valuable time.

We've all heard the 80/20 story about how 80% of the flowers sold in this country are imported. There is a growing awareness of this situation and an increased demand for domestic, locally-grown flowers. As much as some may wish they would just disappear, imported flowers are here to stay. What is needed is an increase in overall flower consumption. If we could increase consumer purchases of flowers, while keeping imports at current levels, I think everyone would be happy. American flower farmers would have more customers buying more of our flowers. If they don't see you face to face at the farmers' market or your farm when buying flowers, they need to be able to see where the flowers they are buying came from so they can choose they flowers wisely. Every farm should put its farm name and location on every flower bunch or bouquet it sells. Consumers need to know they can choose where their flowers come from.

As part of a flower awareness campaign, the ASCFG is coordinating a "Flower Bucket Challenge". This will be a grassroots effort to get the word out to the buying public to buy locally-grown flowers. The plan is to keep it "secret" until it kicks off with everyone posting on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blogs, Web sites, etc on May 1st. (NOTHING public until May 1st.) The plan is to flood the country with images of smiling people holding a bucket or vase of locally-grown flowers, and challenge their friends, family and followers to support the local flower farmer, local economy, and local jobs by buying a bucket or vase of flowers from the local farmers' market, farm stand, farm, etc.

We'll have a web site: www.flowerbucketchallenge.com with pictures, info, and links to the ASCFG flower search, USDA Farmers Market listings, Slow Flowers web site, and other info encouraging people to support their local flower farms by buying flowers. We'll start a discussion on the ASCFG Bulletin Board where ideas and info can be exchanged among ASCFG members before the May 1st launch date. But remember, no mention of the Flower Bucket Challenge anywhere in public before May 1st. For the website, we'll need lots of pictures of people holding a bucket, vase, or armload flowers. If you have any photos you would like to share, please send them to Linda at the ASCFG office via email at lindaascfg@oberlin.net

www.flowerbucketchallenge.com



Join the Movement in Promoting Horticulture:

A National Study and Action Plan

Longwood Gardens, the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS), and FleishmanHillard are teaming up to increase public awareness of the positive attributes of horticulture. We want our educators, public service workers, students with an aptitude for plant science or plant artistry, and the general public to view horticulture as a vital, viable, and vibrant career path. This task will require a concerted and coordinated effort on the part of all those within the horticulture sector, including industry, associations, public gardens, elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and governmental agencies.

The First Step: The National Study

It begins with research. Phase One of the National Study entails a review of existing research already conducted with key stakeholders, and charettes with leading partners to gain valuable insights into public perceptions and industry awareness of horticultural career paths. Phase Two will focus on the university and college sector, while Phase Three will reach out to the public sector. In particular, the goals of the National Study will be to determine awareness levels of horticulture, to understand the motivations and barriers to pursuing a career in horticulture, and to determine what might move potential students and their families in support of horticultural careers through words, images, and associations. The National Study will be comprehensive, multi-phased, and include interviews, surveys and focus groups with:

Horticulture is life.

Horticulture pervades day-to-day life in every corner of the globe; it is essential to our food, our water, and our environment. It is essential to our well-being, and the well-being of our children, our communities, our planet and our future.

Internal stakeholders

- ASHS leaders and members
- Horticulture professors at universities, colleges and technical schools
- Industry leaders
- Representatives from public gardens

External stakeholders

- Youth (K-12), particularly high school students
- Teachers and school administrators, K-12, but particularly high school
- Current horticulturists
- Adults in the general public

Horticulture is universal.

It is an omnipresent science that is at the core of what we value, what we seek, and what we need as human beings.

The Movement: An Action Plan

Taking action is the next step and in three parts. The Education Plan will be developed to integrate key horticultural concepts and the love of plants into the classroom and STEM/STEAM learning initiatives. The Marketing Plan will reach potential students, specifically providing an index of imagery, words and phrases needed to attract students into 2- and 4-year university horticulture programs. The plan will also promote horticulture to the general public and will include

existing work already being accomplished by the many organizations dedicated to spreading the word about horticulture. The Public Advocacy Plan will give life to the marketing plan, creating a movement to extend the vitality and love of horticulture, its essentiality through a very public, multi-year campaign.

Horticulture is invaluable.

You can't put a price on horticulture. It is everything we eat. It is our earth and our soil. It is the plants that surround us. It is all that provides us life and sustains our world.

Anticipated Outcomes

From the national study, and the education, marketing and public advocacy plans:

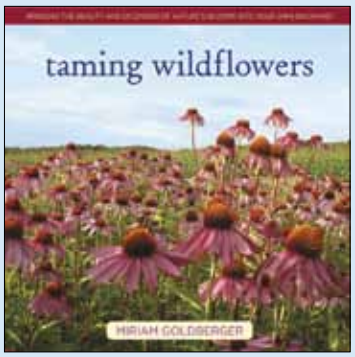
- Improve public perceptions of horticulture
- Develop tactics to ensure that horticulture is part of the national education curriculum
- Increase youth participation in NJHA, JMG, 4-H, and FFA
- Increase number of high school students in horticulture and plant sciences programs
- Increase number of horticulture students in 2-year and 4-year college and university programs
- Increase number of well-trained horticulture employees

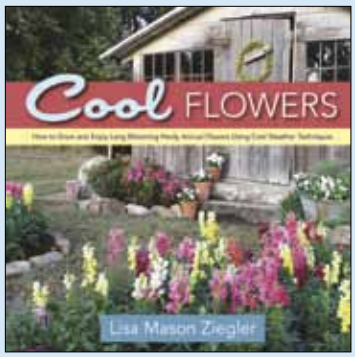
Timeline

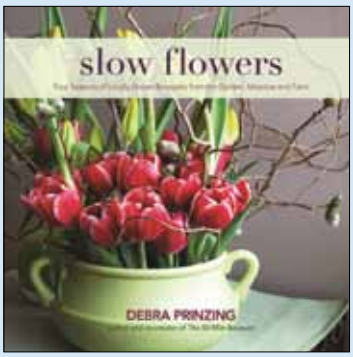
- Summer/Fall 2014 – Conduct National Study Phase 1 and 2
- Spring/Summer 2015 –conduct National Study Phase 3, report disseminated with key findings and recommendations
- Fall 2015 – Develop education plan, marketing plan and public advocacy campaign
- Winter/Spring 2016 – Launch education plan, marketing plan and public advocacy campaign
- Summer 2016 to 2019 – Continue plans and campaigns

For more information about this program, or to donate to the effort, see www.growit.ashs.org

May we recommend...?







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Diana Doll
StrayCat Flower Farm
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Greetings, fellow growers. On the way to the Growers' Intensive in Athens, Georgia, I must have been feeling a tad frisky about being down south among green things and cut flower geeks. Deviating from the usual *Quarterly* check-in, I veered off into Storyville…

Once upon a time, our ancestors were munching their way through field and forest, picking up all sorts of things, sniffing, looking closely, tasting, and learning by habit what it meant to "do lunch". On one such outing, the gang couldn't help but notice one of their pals spending more than the allotted amount of time hanging out in a patch of something-or-other, and they became concerned over the efficacy of such dilly-dallying. They called the wayward one back into the fold, and gathered 'round to see what had been procured by their dreamy companion.

Maybe at first glance they didn't get it: why carry this brightly-colored, lovely-smelling thing around if it couldn't be eaten? But by then their bellies were full, so they lingered over this eye-catching thing, passed it around, and carried it home as a memento of their new discovery. Or conversely, had they been eating these brightly-colored, lovely-smelling things all along, and one day noticed that some of them had a longer shelf life than others? That they didn't have to go out in the rain to get more?

Pleasing to the eye were these brightly-colored things that looked good for days and could be passed around for the amusement of the gang. Some gang members took it to the next level, blending yellows with blues, or reds with purples, for added effect. What a hit this was! Accessible to all, didn't add to the clutter or need dusting, it was cutting-edge in thoughtfulness and artistic expression.

It was an evolutionary event when one gang invited its neighbors over to pass around these new-fangled bouquets of flowers. Each one noticed something different in the mix; some inhaled the greenest leaves, some held the flowers up to the sun to see through the layers of petals, others peered into the Spirograph center of the bloom. Someone else coined the phrase "A bit of scent always clings to the hand that gave the flower."

Just as they were chatting about the next meet-up, the lions came. The party broke up quickly, everyone headed for the treetops. When things had quieted down, they returned to the place to see what was left, what needed to be done next. And because the lions had done a good job of cleaning up, there were only the flowers left to commemorate those who didn't make it to the treetops.

While everyone felt sad about what had happened, they knew enough to forgive the lions for crashing the party, since this sort of thing was only natural and the lions couldn't be blamed for being themselves. The flowers were brought back home and this event was the first funeral recorded on the historical rock walls of never-never land. Thousands of years later, Mark Twain visited the rock wall drawings and coined another apt phrase: "Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the foot that has crushed it."

On to recent events. I recently attended a three-day workshop sponsored by NOFA-VT called "Human Resource and Labor Management for Farmers". It was encouraging to see the room filled with other established growers who have figured out how to manage crops and markets, yet who are still learning about "managing people". The three sessions addressed three "stages" involved in being an agricultural employer:

1. Get your Team: Hire, Train, and Retain a Strong Crew
2. Run your Team: Tools to Manage and Motivate the Crew
3. Adjust your Team: Develop your Leadership Style and Increase Workplace Satisfaction.

Years ago, I implemented a gnarly "job application", designed to weed out dabblers who pictured themselves tip-toeing through the tulips. It worked to the extent that about 50% of inquiries didn't respond once they read the job requirements, and the other 50% answered the questions in the application and were invited to a "job interview". I learned that this interview needs to be more of an audition, where the applicant is expected to work alongside our crew for half a day and is never hired on the spot, no matter how great she or he is. In exchange for their time, I feed them lunch with the crew, and give them the opportunity to make a "show & tell" bouquet to take home. If the poor applicants haven't wilted after all the scrutiny we've subjected them to, they can let us know the next day how they see themselves as being a good fit for the farm.

From the workshop, I also learned that here in Vermont, the Department of Labor has an Outreach division, which is separate from the Enforcement division, and that I can request a free Outreach visit to the farm to learn how that department would assess any situations or questions I might have for them. Such as, where is the legal line between agricultural and non-ag worker? To me, we're all ag workers, whether we're harvesting, making bouquets, delivering flowers, or posting on Facebook.

Not so, according to current (and ever-changing) definitions, which would have us deal with differentiating between all the various tasks involved in farming and managing

separate employment records and insurance coverage for ag vs. non-ag workers. Does anyone actually do this? We folks at the workshop averted our eyes and became suddenly very busy writing things down in our notebooks when the question came up.

According to the Department of Labor, just about everything that happens once you step out of the field is not agriculture (hello IRS, goodbye schedule F?!). Putting flowers together to make bouquets is considered as value-added, manufacturing, or processing. Selling at a farmers' market is considered as retailing, and updating your website is considered office work. (So if you're updating your site from your phone while standing in the field do you log that in on your non-ag time-sheet?) On the bright side, the Outreach division "doesn't share information with the Enforcement division, so farmers shouldn't be afraid to request a consultation with Outreach for fear of being penalized." (We didn't wrangle the state employee who quoted that at the conference sign his name in blood).

I do think the ASCFG should pay attention to this topic so we have a place at the table should it come up for further discussion, as our industry promotes itself and locally-grown flowers in particular.

MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia

Jennie Love
Love 'n Fresh Flowers
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I started Love 'n Fresh Flowers unofficially in 2008 as a tiny market garden that sold flowers at one farmers' market, and officially in 2009 as the humble beginning of the thriving "farmer florist" operation it is today. At that time, I really didn't know anyone doing what I was really keen to do, at least not in such a focused, full-on, local-only "farmer florist" way. That term didn't even exist then! Most farmers I talked to scoffed at me for wanting to tackle weddings (and the stress), and I heard many cautionary tales about Bridezilla. I was told

I should just stick with farmers' markets and get into grocery stores and restaurants. One farmer friend had tried tackling weddings and said if I was going to do weddings, just keep 'em real simple.

At the same time, most florists I talked to also scoffed at me for wanting to use only locally-grown flowers I grew myself for wedding work. I got many finger wags accompanied by "No bride is ever going to let you have that much control. They're all so demanding and controlling. You have to give them what they want." More references to Bridezilla, obviously.

Fast forward to today and hundreds of weddings later, all featuring flowers grown at my farm for amazing, trusting couples, and I haven't met Bridezilla once yet. Seriously, not once! Turns out if you work hard at educating clients and establishing a relationship of collaboration and trust, they'll let you grow all kinds of crazy beautiful stuff for them and never flinch at the thought of foregoing stiff roses and baby's breath. I can't say enough about how much I love my clients!

And alongside the rapid growth and success of Love 'n Fresh—perhaps in part inspired by our example—the floral industry has changed and become not only open to the idea of a "farmer florist", but completely smitten with it. This rather speedy evolution in the approach to floral design is no doubt a fine example of the power of social media to connect the customer directly with the producer. Social media is all well and good, but still a bit of a flash in the pan. Recently the gold standard of publications, *Martha Stewart Weddings* (Spring 2015 issue) published a list of The Top 62 Floral Designers in the nation, and six farmer florists were on that list (including Love 'n Fresh)!!!

I don't know about you, but I consider that news worth shouting about as an Association! This kind of mainstream recognition means locally-grown flowers and a truly

"seasonal" approach to floral design are not just a quirky fad, but a movement that is making a big impact across the national floral industry. As Martha would say, "It's a good thing." and proof that sometimes it's good to break the mold!

But like I said during my demo at the Growers' Intensive in Athens, if you are getting into the more formal floral design side of things with your flower operation, it is important to learn the rules (of good design technique) before you break them. I've broken a lot of "the rules" as I've grown my business, but not before I spent two years taking formal floral design classes to learn the standards and the techniques. If you are a new farmer florist, make sure you take some design classes and don't just "wing it". Now that we, as a collective group/movement, have the attention of national press, we need to do each other proud and work together to make sure our flowers and designs are top notch.

It is also important as we grow as a niche in this industry that we respect the standards in pricing in each of our respective markets. Do not give in to the age-old assumption by customers that farm flowers are "cheap". First, you are going to be doing a lot more work as a farmer florist for that bride-to-be than most traditional florists since you will be spending months growing the flowers in addition to all the customer service and design time all weddings require. Secondly, you do not want to unfairly undercut other designers in your area.

You may be tempted to price low just to get the jobs to build your portfolio. But trust me when I say, that will really hurt you in the long run. You will get known for being cheap (most wedding business is by word-of-mouth) and you will start a downward spiral for all the wedding florists in your area so that no one can charge fairly for their time. It's like two gas stations on opposite corners of a busy intersection: if one lowers its price per gallon by a penny, then the other does too to stay competitive. It initially seems harmless but then that cycle repeats over and over until neither station is making a profit. Instead, do some research and find out what's fair pricing for your area and compete on an even playing field. When you do, that buoys all of us up across the industry.

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SOUTHEAST

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee

Tanis Clifton
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I was honored to help host 2015's first Grower Intensive Conference in my Region. For those of you who were there, thank you for coming to Georgia. For those of you who missed it, we missed you too and will be looking for you next time. I wanted to share some of the details in this episode of my Southeast Regional Report.

The process of planning a conference is involved, much more so than I ever knew. Do you know that the process starts a year in advance? On a cold March day in 2014, with snow falling softly outside the ASCFG main office in Oberlin, the Board of Directors set about making plans for this great organization. One of many items on the agenda was planning the 2015 conference lineup. There are so many things to take into consideration when planning a conference. Questions like: We need a location with several farms to tour, somewhere within a reasonable distance from a major airport, with a great and affordable meeting space, close to awesome speakers, centrally located within the Region, during a time of year when growers are not so busy growing, and it doesn't hurt to be a place people want to go. So, just a heads up, if you think you live in an area that could meet all of those criteria, by all means let your Regional Director know. We may be coming to a city near you! ASCFG's Executive Director, Judy Laushman, our Managing Director, Linda Twining, and the planning committee spent much of 2014 planning all of these components to make an awesome conference.

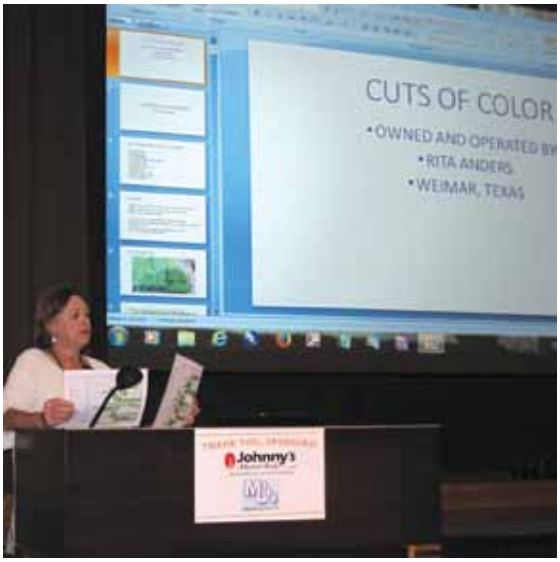
Wined and Dined

Tanis Clifton and Mimo Davis, emcees, ready to "Pump you up!"

We started the event with a welcome reception complete with fabulous hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Ready to "Pump you up" were Mimo Davis of Urban Buds and me as emcees. Luck had it that two days before the conference we had an ASCFG board meeting so all of the board members (the experts) were in the house! We had some really great questions posed with super responses from board members, and other ASCFG members and attendees offering answers and suggestions! We learned special little tidbits like did you know that 7:00 a.m. is too late to cut cerinthe? And that it is better to cut it after it is thoroughly hydrated, like after a rain? We also found out that euphorbia can cause serious problems and in some cases, just one drop of the latex on your skin can cause a rash, the severity of which depends on how each individual reacts to it. If the white, milky latex touches a cut or sore or squirts into your eyes, you are courting trouble of major proportions. Some flowers just aren't worth it! This and tons of other great information were imparted at this fun reception.

I also realized during this reception just how diverse and amazing this group is. We have members who are just starting out all the way to growers who have been farming for over 30 years. We have designers who love to source local flowers as well as farmer florists who do it all. We have experts in the field at the university level as well as horticultural suppliers. So it seems that there is no topic for which this organization cannot provide an expertise in; how lucky can we get?

The Good Stuff



Rita Anders of Cuts of Color wowed us with her top ten flowers.

I am pleased to announce that we had 29 states represented at this conference! We had folks from as far off as Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, all the way to Idaho, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and everywhere in between. Tennessee members took the cake with the most from one state. The ASCFG is tasked with the job of educating its members and that is the main reason for organizing these conferences. We had wonderful, knowledgeable and inspirational speakers sharing their expertise with us.

As far as having the conference at The Georgia Center on the campus of UGA, you know what they say: "Location, location, location." Following is a great description from member Tom Parker of Parkerhouse Flowers, New Jersey. "It was nice to stay in one room so you didn't have to run to get a seat at your priority session. I could see and hear everything clearly and the seats were very comfortable with each workspace individually lighted. You could even plug in a phone or notebook, if necessary. The speakers were all very interesting and I learned a lot."

We started the conference with the awesome Rita Anders of Cuts of Color. She wowed us with beautiful images of her top ten flowers. They include: Karma dahlias, sweet peas, ranunculus, anemones, snapdragons, larkspur, sunflowers, lisianthus, zinnias, gomphrena, and celosia. She offered tips about all of these flowers along with sources, wholesale and retail prices, harvest and postharvest advice. With ten greenhouses and row after row of field grown cuts, she has gotten this flower thing down pat.

The next presenters were Dr. John Dole and Dr. Alicain Carlson. They told us everything we needed to know about postharvest procedures. I think I FINALLY understand the difference between holding, hydrating and vase solutions. Here is it is: Holding solution has an acidifier to properly lower the pH, a biocide to keep the water clean, and carbohydrates to feed the flower. The hydrating solution helps with water uptake and has the acidifier and biocide only. The vase solution has just the carbohydrates to feed the flower. I also learned that a few flowers like lisianthus and marigolds benefit from afternoon harvest, because they have a higher carbohydrate content in the afternoon. One of the important take-home messages was "If you would drink out of your harvest buckets, then they are clean enough for your flowers too." So would you drink out of your buckets?

John Dole takes his own advice about keeping buckets clean enough to drink from.

Our next presenter was Dr. Peter Hartel, soil microbiologist. By the time he was done he had us all excited about soil health, soil history, soil components and just what it going on with soil! He explained that because soil is part of a tripartite relationship with soil microorganisms and plants, soil is alive, dynamic, and the most complex of all habitats. He embraces this complexity through a new term, soil health, and showed that a healthy soil is every bit as beautiful as a specialty cut flower.

He shared a quote from the *Bartram's Travels*, published in 1791: "The soil is a deep, rich, dark mould, on a deep stratum of reddish brown tenacious clay," a description of soil somewhere between Savannah and Athens, Georgia. Sadly, none of that soil remains; it has all been eroded from tillage farming. He is deeply passionate about soil health and his passion was contagious. He explained why there are so many problems with soil health, now it is our job to correct that problem. Time to get some dirt under your fingernails, y'all.

Elizabeth Dean of Wilkerson Mills Gardens inspired and entertained us with her vast knowledge of woody cuts. We all loved her wit, and interesting woody variety suggestions. She started off her session with a picture of her farm telling us that it was, "The temple of costly experience." I think we have all learned that lesson at one time or another. She shared a host of suggested woody and perennial cuts to offer variety when we did not have other flowers in season. She suggested flowering branches in the spring from such beauties as *Chionanthus virginicus* (fringe tree) and *Cornus florida* 'Plena' (double-flowered dogwood) among others. Another great suggestion was for vining plants such as honeysuckle 'Belgica' as well as the fragrant *Clematis armandii* 'Armand' (white) and 'Apple Blossom' (pink). She suggested numerous beautiful blooming shrubs to use as cuts, and shared some liner sources: www.manorview.com, www.griffithpropagationnuersery.com, www.heritageseedlings.com Elizabeth also referenced the books Manual of Woody Landscape Plants and Woody Ornamentals for Cut Flower Growers and Florists. Her session was so chock full of information it blew my mind!

John Dole and Alexa Wright answer zinnia questions.

Travis Hootman and Alexa Wright, both completing research at NCSU, gave us tons of information on comparing planting densities, succession planting, disease and breeding. These studies were supported in part with an ASCFG Research Foundation Grant. Travis indicated that in his studies, while a higher planting density gave more flowers, there was also more severe incidence of disease with most flowers studied. Also, transplanting zinnias gave a greater yield than direct seeding, while the opposite is true for cosmos where direct seeding gave a larger yield. While direct seeding of sunflowers yielded a larger flower head, fewer stems were harvested than with transplanted sunflowers. So, if you want larger sunflowers try direct seeding and a wide spacing. If you want average-sized sunflowers, try transplanting with a closer spacing.

While most of us are familiar with Benary Giant, Oklahoma, and Zowie, research and breeding goals include developing zinnias which include disease-resistant, and drought- and heat-tolerant cut flower types. Be on the lookout for zinnias with these traits in the future.

Our final session was a demonstration of wreath making with Donna Mills of Floral and Hardy Flower Farm, using a wreath machine from Maple Ridge Supply. She said having this

machine has really increased her income from November through December, with 300 wreaths made and sold this past season alone! The process was simple using this machine and she was able to assemble a wreath in about 15-20 minutes. She usually uses an 8" wreath form for her standard front door-sized wreath.

She uses native species and common evergreen species such as eastern red cedar, Leyland cypress, Carolina sapphire, boxwood and magnolia to make absolutely gorgeous wreaths. She gave us important tips like soaking the completed wreath in a kiddie pool to hydrate, and to always have an extra wreath machine spring on hand because it will break at the most inopportune time. Donna also suggested not using pine as it does not hold up for long. She shared lots of beautiful pictures of wreaths she has created. To end this fabulous day of awesome speakers we had a special surprise for one lucky person. Maple Ridge Supply donated a wreath machine for the ASCFG to give away. The lucky winner was Abby Barber.

Tours in the Mist

It was absolutely gorgeous on the day of the speaker sessions, with blue skies and 70 degrees. As Murphy's Law would have it, on the tour day it was misty rain all day, but we all still had a really great time and saw some absolutely awesome farms. We started off at Woodland Gardens in Winterville. Celia Barss, farm manager, lead us on a tour of greenhouses, high tunnels, Haygrove tunnels, fields, and the processing building. They grow 95% vegetables and fruit and 5% flowers. Woodland Gardens is certified organic and uses products such as McEnroe potting soil for starting seeds, and feather meal to fertilize. She also says that they have been using the same seedling trays for 12 years; Winstrip trays are hard to come by, but worth it. They use landscape fabric to help with weed suppression and get several years out of the cloth. At the end of each season they roll it up and dip it in diluted hydrogen peroxide to disinfect. Celia runs a tight ship and everything, I mean everything, was in order, including perfectly straight, beautiful rows of lettuce and celery, and tomato plants with not a single bit of disease. The beauty of this farm was inspiring.

3 Porch Farm Design Studio

Our next stop was 3 Porch Farm in Comer. This farm belongs to Steve and Mandy O'Shea. These two are so very innovative; in fact all products on their farm are grown and stored using solar power, then delivered using carbon-neutral vehicles which run on vegetable oil from local restaurants. They use only the good oil, none of the fast food restaurant oils work in their vehicles. See, even their vehicles have good taste! They have all sorts of cool nooks and crannies including a neat rustic little design studio, a covered potting shed, a little greenhouse, some hoophouses and a cabin in the woods. They proudly discussed their new bed shaper and plastic mulch layer. It has saved them hours of back-breaking work. They are using biodegradable plastic in line with their earth-friendly practices. They were such a sweet and welcoming couple that we were all so happy to be there on their farm tromping through the mist and mud.

Next stop, Watson Mill Bridge State Park. This beautiful site borders 3 Porch Farm and boasts the longest covered bridge in the state. Sadly, we had so many other places to see that we did not get to see the bridge itself. But we did get to enjoy a floral demonstration by Jennie Love of Love 'n Fresh Flowers in a cozy pavilion in the park. It was nice to get into the dry for everyone, enjoy a nice lunch, and hear Jennie share her wealth of design knowledge with us.

Jennie says she likes to design as she goes and works by inspiration. She started her design with a beautiful urn called the Chelsea vase, donated by Accent Decor. Jennie does not use any type of foam in her design works so she showed us two techniques for keeping the arrangement stable. One is the use of chicken wire inside the vase, another is a taped grid across the top of the vase. She harvested some beautiful blooms for her arrangement from 3 Porch Farm including ornamental 'Crane' kale, ranunculus, smilax, as well as a few hellebores. She suggested matching the vase with the color palette of your flowers to create a "symphony of color." Another tip when designing is to hide the edge of the vase with flowers and greenery. We all thoroughly enjoyed watching her create this beautiful piece and bombarded Jennie with tons of questions during and after her presentation.

Our final tour was to Davis Floral in Dewy Rose. Michael and Lisa Davis graciously led us on a tour of their three-acre greenhouse. Davis Floral started in 1964 as a greenhouse tomato operation, then transitioned to chrysanthemum, snapdragon, and carnations as cut flowers. Sadly, as so much flower production moved outside the U.S., Davis Floral transitioned to propagating

annuals into finished crops for garden centers in the Atlanta area. They heat with large boilers that feed hot water through pipes under the greenhouse benches. Their greenhouses were full of beautiful geraniums, hydrangeas, and lots of other annuals.

All Good Things Must Come to an End

To sum it up, I believe I can speak for many when I say it was great meeting new friends, wonderful to see old friends, and connect with other flower nerds. While I learned so much from each of the speakers and the tours, I also learned so much visiting with other growers and designers over lunch, between sessions, and in the lobby. This group is unique in that everyone is so willing to help, to share, to impart helpful tips, and share the love of growing. I have come to learn that each and every one of us has a flower story. Some have vast expertise while others are just getting started. While some of us have acreage to grow flowers, others have a small urban space or even a backyard, while some are designers who want to source local flowers, we all have a common interest, sharing the love of beautiful, long lasting local flowers which are unique and vibrant. See ya at the next conference.

NORTH AND CENTRAL

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan

Mimo Davis Duschack
Urban Buds City Grown Flowers
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This is the time of year that we are filled with anticipation, the ordering completed. The greenhouses are overstuffed with starts wanting to bust out of their little cells, and the smell of dollar bills coming our way is in the air!

I have never considered myself one of those creative, artistic types who with a simple touch can make anything beautiful! To be that person has always been a dreamed deferred. But this past winter as I sat for days on end with spreadsheets sprawled on our dining table and two computers running, and bifocals hanging off my nose, Miranda took a picture of me. And for the first time I did feel the artistic flair of what a composer must feel. Creating the symphony of flowers in "F" major!

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I do this by planning the successions, creating the tones, and the pairings as I turned the pages, envisioning the art of flowers moving throughout our growing seasons. As we all know, sometimes our best-laid plans on paper don't consider the wild variables of nature. It's the act of planning that get us closest to where we want to be, and the vision for our farm growth. This process comes with time and experience on our own farms, in our own grounding microclimate of our farms.

It is concerning to me that many novice farmers want planting guides and planting schedules from others who have created these documents, over the years, and based information that is farm specific. I see it as the difference between the creator of the music and the DJ who plays the song. The nuances of microclimate and personal preference can get lost in translation. The novice's best bet for starting to understand the orchestration of the farm is from copious note taking! I believe one of the most valuable tools we have is our past year's records. Taking the time to make daily notes is the key to successful succession planting and having a bountiful season.

For us at Urban Buds, spring came in mid-March with a bumper crop of ranunculus, stock, freesia, and anemones. It seemed like overnight our daily chore list went from "ten things to do" to fifty. It can be daunting when the first flowers of spring come in after our months of rest. But those first sales sure do feel good. When the farm chores overwhelm me I take a moment to step back and prioritize the list. At the top is always seeding, because if you get behind in seeding your symphony falls flat. Priorities are as follows, in order of importance: seeding, harvesting and planting. These basic tasks always help to keep me focused. And they will help you too. May your symphony of flowers be brilliant!

SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah

Rita Anders
Cuts of Color
ritajanders@cvctx.com

By the time you are reading this our Region—well, most of us anyways—will be up to our elbows picking all those fall-planted flowers. When you are not overtired, log in to the Members Only section of the ASCFG website and look for the talks from our March meetings in Georgia and California. I attended the Georgia meeting along with ten other growers from Texas, and several from other states in our region. Our Region was strongly represented by those who risked the ice and snow storms coming and going.

Before the Grower Intensive, the ASCFG Board of Directors met for a day and a half. We were busy taking care of all the things boards do and planning some upcoming projects that will certainly help our membership. As they are implemented, there will be updates via Short Cuts and in *The Cut Flower Quarterly* throughout the year. I'm especially excited about the small film we hope to make and distribute to different audiences to educate the American public about locally-grown flowers. There are some others I'm excited about but need some more work to get them up and going.

The first day of the grower meeting, a great slate of speakers gave presentations. On the second day we went on the tours to three different farms and spent the rainy day asking lots of questions and enjoying the hospitality of our gracious hosts. Southeast Regional Director Tanis Clifton did an awesome job and showed her southern hospitality to all. Tanis will do a great job about telling you about the meeting in depth, so please read her column as well. I hope you take the time to read all Regional Reports as they can all be helpful and interesting. I was so happy to see all the new young growers who attended as well as all the familiar faces. I enjoyed all the conversations and more than once thought what a wonderful group of awesome people.

I was so happy to see and meet growers who want to start growing flowers. It's refreshing to see how excited they are about their new venture and reminds me why I'm in this business. It's every parent's dream to hear "I want to do what you do, Mom." which my son just recently presented me with, and now he has started asking all the questions of how exactly I started. My answer is "Slow, and learn as you go, and not making too many big mistakes." It also reminds me of how much it takes to get started. Knowledge, infrastructure, good ground, electricity, good water source, and oh not to forget money. I wish them all the best and hope all their dreams come true.

I again had an eventful trip back home because here in south Texas, ice and snow are not common words we use often. I was greeted by a large amount of flowers to make into bouquets so I hit the ground running to help my crew make many bouquets and straight bunches for my store for the next day's deliveries.

Rita's Ranunculus Raves

'Elegance Salmon'

'Elegance Rosa-Charo'

'Elegance Crema'

'Ariel'

We are busy picking the fruits of our labor from all our fall greenhouse plantings of snapdragons, dianthus, delphiniums, campanula, and ranunculus and anemones. My Georgia presentation illustrated my top ten flower crops. These we produce in mass quantities for use in straight bunches and bouquets. I also shared an availability sheet that I use to tell customers what's available when. The spreadsheet of my planting schedule is posted in the Members Only section of the ASCFG site. In it I provided a list of what I grow, and where, when, and how it's planted. I tried to show how we succession plant some of our varieties, as well as spacing, and sources. Please keep in mind that it was created for zone 8b, and should be treated as a guide only, adjusted to your zone.

I recently tried some of the Italian Biancheri ranunculus. I'm excited about 'Elegance Salmon' as it is beautiful and has produced well. The plants are healthy and vigorous.

Another color that is really outstanding is 'Elegance Rosa Charo', a very light blush pink. The stems are very hardy and nice height.

'Elegance Crema' is another beauty. It has a light, almost butter color. You might think it's white but it has a shade of soft yellow. Also has a good height but stems not as thick as 'Salmon' and 'Rosa Charo'.

I decided to try a couple of the more expensive Pon-Pon varieties—'Ariel', 'Aurora', and 'Silente'. Of the three 'Ariel' was my favorite. I liked the color of the 'Silente' but I didn't get good height. 'Aurora' is pretty but 'Ariel' is gorgeous. It kind of looks like one of the super green varieties on steroids. My new crush, but at a price of two dollars a bulb, you must have the right market to make money on this one, such as florists and wedding work. I trialed more than 15 colors but the mentioned ones were my standouts. I did have some that came up and slowly died and I probably was the culprit and did something wrong, but it was all variety specific. In all cases the entire planting of the color either survived or it didn't so not quite sure what happened.

I love trying new flowers and or ways to grow them. This past fall I was able to get some dahlia tubers from Ednie, and grew them over the winter in the greenhouse with my Karma dahlias, using supplemental light and heat. My next experiment will be taking cuttings off all my spring-planted dahlias in hopes of carrying over plants for next winter.

My 'Café Au Laits' should arrive this week and I can't wait to grow this lovely variety much sought after by wedding and event florists. I also am growing a white one called 'Lady Natalie' which is available through Ednie. 'Natalie' has a large flower with really good stem length. I have a large amount of dahlia bulbs also coming from Banner Flower Farm and I will be testing these for how well they grow and produce in my area. I will try to keep good records and will share my findings with you at the end of the summer.

I'm also trialing several vining plants for sales to florists for wedding and event work. Among these are *Clematis recta purpurea*, clematis 'Helios' from GeoSeed, *Clematis tangutica* 'Radar Love' (yellow flower heads with neat seedheads), *Cobaea scandens* 'Alba' and 'Violet' (also known as cup and saucer vine) covered with huge deep purple bells), nasturtium, and *Cardiospermum*, love in a puff, a ferny-leafed vine with small white flowers and charming puffy seedheads. I started all from seed that I obtained from Ivy Garth and Geo. I hope to use the vines along with the thornless raspberries and sweet peas in my wedding work, and will experiment with selling straight bunches.

I also will be sending a few emails out to members in the Region, and if anyone has some exciting news, please share with me by emailing me at ritajanders@cvctx.com. I hope to arrange a potluck on my farm in August, at which time we would like to spend the day sharing stories and growing ideas. More information to follow. I wish all a great spring and happy growing!

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Alberta, and British Columbia

Paula Rice
BeeHaven Farm
behavenflowers@gmail.com

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going."
"One thing is more than no-thing."
"Be like a chicken in the barnyard, don't look up—just keep pecking away."

These are mottos that have served me well over the years of growing a cut flower business. With all the dynamics of being a wife and mom mixed into the bunch, there are times when looking up might have been just too much. Some days it can feel that every force is against you as you feel completely buried and overwhelmed. You are armed only with a dream and a passion. But let me tell you, passion can trump everything. Passion is a serious fuel.

I know you have the passion to be a cut flower grower, after all you're an ASCFG member and you're reading this. The ASCFG has definitely been another serious fuel for my business engine. Though I have had knockdowns and setbacks, I never came to the table with inferior product or felt ashamed or embarrassed to be "peddling" my flowers. If anything, being on top of my game has occasionally been the source of a setback. Sounds oxymoronic, but lest you get too much wind in your sails, stay humble and think ahead a little bit. (I have a story to illustrate this point in this article.)

That being said, I want to encourage you, so today I'm going to talk about the bad and the ugly.

Very likely you aren't starting out with secretaries, marketing managers, and excellent know-how field labor. The buy local movement has smoothed and cleared the road a bit but things still don't always turn out like you hope. Gaining market share and a market presence is without a doubt the toughest part of the business. Mostly, we love to grow and that comes easily and naturally. It isn't all "sweet-smelling roses".

I remember checking out a farmers' market in a big city 1½ hours from me. I asked to participate one afternoon and was admitted. I gathered my flowers and made some jam and pies and headed out on a Wednesday afternoon. It was a success. I definitely wanted to be in that market: so many people, soooo much opportunity. But I was small and that was going to take serious flowers to meet the demand. I vamped up my growing efforts so that I could produce consistently and reliably. The next year I had a critical mass of lilies and phoned the market manager. Yes, I could come to the SATURDAY market (YAY!) I waited patiently to receive one of the crummiest spots available, and I was happy. I worked hard all day at that market. Every person who stopped by my booth got my spiel of how I was a dedicated flower grower, and I planned to come every week as long as there was room for me.

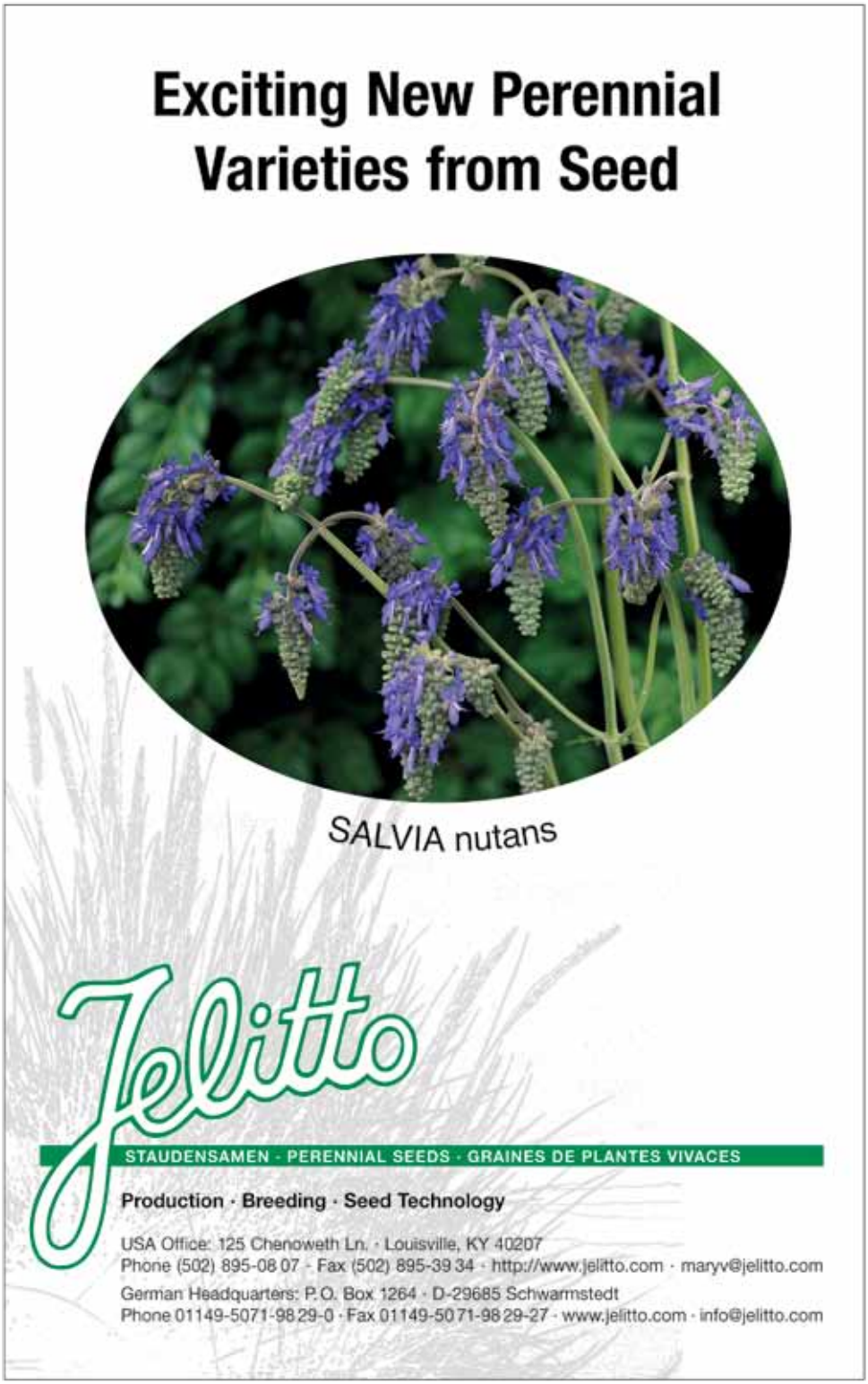
What I didn't realize was that some of those people were actually market vendors coming to "check out the competition." (That specific comment came from an employee of a super busy vegetable farmer who also had quite a few flowers and who later turned out to work for the president of the market board.) He said they were super nice and I thanked him. Long story short, at the end of the market, the manager informed me that I was not going to be able to come back. She said that several vendors felt there were enough flowers already there and didn't want me back. Clearly a case of market vendors using the market manager to police their competition. It was a blow. I was too dumbfounded to even respond. I really had no idea that could happen.

But I regrouped, read their rules and regulations, and the next year filled out their form to be a permanent, dedicated vendor. They accepted my money and application. (YAY!) Later in the year I was ready to set up and phoned the market manager. She remembered me and said I couldn't come. I petitioned the board and was actually somewhat hopeful because they had a few community members on the board as well as market farmers. But it did no good. I received a very well-written letter explaining how some rules had been changed for out of county vendors and they were very sorry about the oversight and haven't been able to figure out how or why my money was even accepted.

It was a bummer, but it wasn't going to take me down. Having a superior product and showing up with oodles of awesome lilies was the wow factor I wanted for the consumers, but it didn't serve me well with the competition. Much could be learned here when trying to enter an established, busy market.

A market I am at every Saturday has grown over the years beyond my expectations. I used to hope for $300 in the height of the season, and would be so happy if I could get to $350. (Very likely none of that was even at a profitable level if you completely expensed everything out.) This market grew very easily and naturally because I simply took everything I had. Over time, it grew to $600, then up and up.

There are always vendor to vendor dynamics as well. There was/is another dedicated flower vendor at this market. Mostly, I just mind my own business. I don't really look up too often to see what my competition is doing (and I really wish other people would do that). One morning she marched over to me as I was unloading my van and annoyingly proclaimed that I was, "flooding the market with all my flowers!" I told her I wasn't flooding the market, I was growing my market. I didn't like the confrontation, it did bug me.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I do want her to be successful; it is not my intention to squash anybody. Hopefully, she saw it differently after that. I know she sells more flowers now, with both of us there, than she used to. We just have different styles and different energy levels. She also happens to be the queen of dinner plate dahlias and gladiolas, so I make sure not to step into that territory.

Those early market days were not that profitable but they were necessary. All those events I participated in that were total duds were not actually total duds. Yes, you want to make money, but sometimes you first need to get known and that can be a business expense and a time suck. I come from a very rural area so people were very unfamiliar with the idea of growing flowers for cuts. If you live next to a city, you will not need to build the idea of buying flowers nearly as much. You mostly just need people to know about you.

And that is where all these random "events" come into play. If you didn't make a sale then you at least gave them a super cute magnetic business card to put on their refrigerator. You now have a shot for a sale into the future, and the future does come and it comes with sweet exponential power. I promise.

In time you'll get proud of what you do and the flowers you produce. You'll probably get spoiled. Nothing goes to your head quicker than people constantly

telling you how awesome your flowers are and wonder at how you can do it all. And when the rare occasion comes along that someone isn't interested in your product, it will come as a total shock to you. Last year, I was on my florist route for the first go-around of the year. One of my shops had sold out during the winter and had moved to a whole new location, along with an entirely new crew and owner. I knocked on the back door, entered and introduced myself.

Boy, did it take me back to the old days. It had been a while since I had been treated like a second-rate peddler of goods taking up the florist's precious time. I had totally forgotten what it took to get a "traditional" florist on board—my mistake. It was good for me, keeps me grounded. I didn't miss a beat, though. I passed her a couple free bunches to test my product out, purposely giving her things that would knock her socks off, and told her I would come every week about the same time. She is now a great customer and I am eternally thankful for the support of all my florists. I know they go against everything they are used to by waiting for me to show up. I know they are offered big discounts on bulk purchases that many times could easily squeeze me out of their weekly flower budget so thank you, thank you, thank you!

Passion is what has carried me through. For every failure, I have several successes. For every bad, I have ten goods. If it's going to take knocking on ten doors to get someone to buy your flowers, then you'd better get knocking. Remember: When the going gets tough, the tough get going. One thing is more than no-thing. Be like a chicken in the barnyard, don't look up—just keep pecking away.

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Do you have any ugly peonies?
Call us weird, but we kind of like them...
Leaf spots
Flower bud lesions
Shoot dieback
Basal stem decay
Contact...
The WSU Ornamental Plant Pathology program is conducting research on management of Botrytis gray mold in peonies that involves identifying Botrytis isolates from around the country.
So, if you grow peonies and see symptoms you think are associated with Botrytis...
Gary Chastagner
chastag@wsu.edu
Andrea Garfinkel
andrea.garfinkel@wsu.edu

CalFlowers Opens Membership to ASCFG Members for First Time

Many ASCFG members likely have heard of CalFlowers (formerly known as NORCAL) or done business with our members. We are pleased to announce that CalFlowers membership is now open to cut flower growers from all states, not just California!

As a quick refresh: from the field to the consumer, CalFlowers makes flowers happen. Its current members —California flower growers and wholesalers, distributors, retailers, floral products suppliers, and transportation partners in California and nearly every state in the nation—ensure that a stunning variety of farm-fresh flowers reach retailers, wholesalers and consumers quickly.

CalFlowers recently expanded the qualifications of its associate membership class to include cut flower growers outside of the state of California. By welcoming non-California flower growers into CalFlowers, the association intends to contribute to the expansion of the U.S. flower market—the view that rising tides lifts all boats, or in this case, sales of cut flowers. If we can increase the per capita flower consumption in the U.S., even just 5%, it's an opportunity to benefit everyone in the industry.

This expansion of its scope and membership reflects work done the last year and a half by the leadership and staff of CalFlowers. This soul-searching resulted in a shift of our focus from being merely a discount buyers' club of transportation services for a narrowly defined membership base, to having a broader impact on the floral industry at large. One path of this new strategy is to improve collaboration among the many floral industry organizations to further promote the business of flowers.

Offer to ASCFG Members

We are now accepting applications from commercial cut flower growers from outside California to become Associate Members (non-voting), thereby eligible for the following benefits:

- Exclusive transportation rates (e.g., FedEx—a comprehensive program offering up to 66.5% off Express air shipments and up to 34% off FedEx Ground; OnTrac in the Western states—over 70% off standard rates, and special air shipping rates on Air Canada, Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Airlines, Southwest Airlines and Unites Airlines);
- Dedicated customer service representation from CalFlowers and from many of these transportation providers to address shipping issues;
- All written correspondence and communications from CalFlowers;
- Members' Only access to new website, and thereby access to more resources and fellow CalFlowers members;
- Reduced registration rates to CalFlowers' meetings and events; and
- Access to participating in evolving industry collaborations to grow floral marketing here in the U.S.

For a more complete description of CalFlowers' member benefits, please visit our website at www.cafgs.org.

Further, as a gesture of collaboration and cooperation, CalFlowers is happy to share 50% of your first-year dues with the ASCFG. For any ASCFG member in good standing in 2015, and any new ASCFG member in 2015 that also joins CalFlowers between now and December 31, 2015, CalFlowers will give 50% of the CalFlowers first-year annual dues to ASCFG. It will look like the following:

	Dues/Fees	ASCFG Share
New Member Applicant 1st Year Dues *	$295	$150
Application Processing Fee	$ 75	$ 0
Per Applicant Total	$370	$150

* CalFlowers' membership year is June 1—May 31

Many new members report that they recoup their annual dues on shipping rate savings within the first couple of weeks of becoming a CalFlowers member.

If you have any questions about this offer, or the benefits of CalFlowers' membership, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Respectfully,

Michael T. LoBue
Chief Executive Officer

CAL FLOWERS™

California Association of Flower Growers & Shippers

Callifornia Association of Flower Growers & Shippers represents the professional needs and interest of the California Floral & Ag Industries, offering a variety of cost-saving programs and beneficial services. Our member benefits, transportation programs, events and communications all help increase the flow of products through networking, lower freight costs and information.

Our Membership Currently Consists of:

- 170 Floral Members
  (California Floral Growers & Distributors)
- 385 Associate Members
  (Out-of-State Floral Companies, Transportation Carriers & Industry Partners)
- 20 Ag Buddy Members
  (Non Floral / Perishable Distributing Companies, ie: Fresh Produce)
- New in 2015
  Out of State Growers are now eligible for Membership

Membership Transportation Benefits:

CalFlowers works hard to bring its members the lowest transportation rates possible, and to get their products to their destinations FRESHER & FASTER! As a member you have the combined volumes that give the Association the power to negotiate exclusive contracts with air and ground carriers which mean big savings! Membership does make a difference.

Below are some of our services:

- **CalFlowers FedEx Program**
  The industry Standard. Our exclusive program offers member discounts of over 66.5% as well as many custom features designed to lower shipping costs.
- **CalFlowers OnTrac Program**
  Our exclusive door to door program offers members discounted rates over 70% off list rates plus many other custom features unique to our membership.
- **Discounted Airline Rates**
  CalFlowers members receive the lowest air cargo rates available with the major airline cargo carriers.

For an application to become a member, please contact Chris Johnson, Director of Transportation, at 760-533-5580 or email chris@cafgs.org. For more information about CalFlowers, visit our website at www.cafgs.org.

1500 41st Avenue, Suite 240. Capitola, California 95010
- www.cafgs.org
- Phone: (831) 479-4912
- Fax: (831) 479-4914

Peony Growers Receive Grants for On-farm Research

Two Alaska peony farms were chosen to receive funding from the ASCFG

To save new growers from making cost mistakes when establishing cut flower peony operations, Rita Jo Shoultz of Alaska Perfect Peony in Fritz Creek is expanding her current web site to include the basics of peony production, including discussions of soil, location, fertigation, variety selection, post-harvest treatment options, and market planning. All growers will benefit from this "how to" information.

Rita Jo Shoultz

In Interior Alaska, it is not uncommon for winter temperatures to dip to -40F or more for several weeks at a time. Accurate temperate recordings are essential in determining the efficacy of winter mulch (straw, or frost blankets) on peony plants. David and Jill Russell, of Boreal Peonies in Two Rivers, will determine if mulching with straw or frost blankets makes a significant difference at root bud level (2 inches below ground) compared to snow cover or no treatment.

David and Jill Russell

Following Her Passion to a Cut Flower Career

"By converting my hobby into a career, I am truly following my bliss and know my success will be measured through my passion, drive, and spirit."

So Lauren Behrmann, a student at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, concluded one section of her application for the Dave Dowling Scholarship. The ASCFG Board was so impressed by her eloquence, experience, and organization, that they awarded her the Scholarship for 2015.

Lauren Behrmann

Lauren is majoring in plant and soil science with an emphasis in horticulture, and minoring in general business—a pretty smart combination for any aspiring cut flower grower. She has worked at a local nursery, and in the university greenhouses.

Congratulations to Lauren, and welcome to the ASCFG!

Keep an Eye on the Site

Watch for the launching of the new Members Only portal of www.ascfg.org. The best part of the redesign is that past articles from *The Cut Flower Quarterly* will be easily searchable by keyword. Access to the Bulletin Board, Community Network, videos, ASCFG documents, and much more will be easily found and ready to explore!

RECORD-BREAKING LIST OF

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members!

Erica Maust and Andrew Olson, Chicory Florals, Philadelphia, PA
Britton Barbee, Prospect Hill Farm, Bumpass, VA
Irene Berkowitz, Treadlight Farm, Bovina Center, NY
Jane Berry, Ottawa Lake, MI
Elizabeth Blackburn, Dizzy Lizzie's Farm, Erieville, NY
Michelle Bolton, Memphis, TN
Shelly Brubaker, Little Creek Valley, New Paris, OH
Shailah Bunce, Chatham, MI
Mary Ann Burk, The Barn Swallow, Charlottesville, VA
Michelle Burrows, AACT High School, Reno, NV
Tom Caan, Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Inc., Mechanicsburg, PA
Arla Casselman, Warren, ME
Seth Chapin, Napa, CA
Durga Chigurupati, Patra Designs, Beachwood, OH
Sarah Clarkson, Northport, NS
Jackie Coldsmith, Taneytown, MD
Karen Colini, Chagrin Falls, OH
Colie Collen, Flower Scout, Troy, NY
Krishana Collins, Tea Lane Farm, Chilmark, MA
Tania Cubberly, Windrose Flowers, Old Mill Creek, IL
Janet Czarnecki, Redwood Roots Farm, Arcata, CA
Jessica Dabandan, Tracy, CA
Cheryl T.Daman, Springville, IA
Penny Day, Three D Farms, Arnoldsville, GA
Sarah Desmedt, Bloom Flower Farm, Nokesville, VA
Debbie Dyer, Louisville, KY
Lindsey and Kenny Easton, L. Easton and Company, Wimauma, FL
Anne Everitt, Fort Collins, CO
Lindsey Fares, Petal and Pine Design, Owensboro, KY
Amanda Filsinger, HMR Designs, Chicago, IL
Jason Fischbach, Ashland, WI
Karen Flowers, Our Table, Sherwood, OR
Jill and Keith Forrester, Whitton Farms, Tyronza, AR
John Fowler, Newtown, PA
Wanda Fox, Fox Flower Market, Richmond, IL
Amanda Frankewicz, Alluring Blooms, Madison, WI
Mary Ganous, Arlington, VA
Ashley Gibson, Austin, TX
Rachel Gordon, Taproot Flowers, Brooklyn, NY
Philippe Grondier, Montluel Rhone-Alps, France
Katie Gustafson, Greenstone Fields, Lancaster, PA
Mary Louise Hagler, MLCH Garden, Augusta, GA
Sarah Herritage, Medford, MA
LeeAnn Huber, Coseytown Flowers, Greencastle, PA
Danica Jones, Shelton, WA
Kristin L. Jones, Laurel Leigh Gardening, Winston-Salem, NC
Linda Jones, Wegmans Organic Farm, Canandaigua, NY
Liza Judge, August Farm, Rochester, WA
John Keeton, Geneva, NY
Robert King, Troy, MO
Daan Kneppers, Green Works Int., Schagen, The Netherlands
Brian Lapinski, Down to Earth Farm, Jacksonville, FL
Adrienne Lee, Bella Donna Floral, Knox, ME
Sharon Leissner, FreshGro Herb Flower Farm, Plano, TX
Jason Levin, Dos Gringos, Vista, CA
Kirsten Liebl, Essex Farm, Essex, NY
Andrea Loewen, Morning Glory Acres, Hardinsburg, IN
Curtis and Janet Louie, Green Valley Floral, Salinas, CA
Diego Lozada, Smith & Smith Farms, Dayton, NV
Anna Mack, Wild & Cultivated, Housatonic, MA
Erica Maust, Chicory Florals, Philadephia, PA
Janelle McCrackin, Morning Song Farm, Stanwood, WA
Lindsey and Joshua McCullough, Red Twig Farm, Johnstown, OH
Sarah Monteiro, Farmhand Flowers, Germantown, NY
Tresa Moyers, Bonita, LA
Becky Newton, Decatur, IL
Bahiyyah Parks, Ecoblossoms Farm, Upper Marlboro, MD
Emily Anne Polhemus, Blomster Field Farm, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Katherine A. Polhemus, Blomster Field Farm, Carmichaels, PA
Amy Pomaro, Kehoe Designs, Chicago, IL
Shanti Rade, Whipstone Farm, Paulden, AZ
Carolina Ramirez, The USA Bouquet, Miami, FL
Gail Read, Blithewold Mansion Gardens & Arboretum, Bristol, RI
Carolyn Rech, Magpie Grove Farm, West Sacramento, CA
Ginny Ryder, Redwood Roots Farm, McKinleyville, CA
John and Cynthia Schoustra, Greenwood Daylily Gardens, Somis, CA
Stephen Sehlhorst, Green Acres, Cincinnati, OH
Marta Shearin, Rose Path Gardens, Corinth, MS
Mary Slingluff, Avalon Gardens Nursery, Chardon, OH
Danielle Smith, Bear Root Herb Farm, Florence, MA
Judy Stevens, Golden Russet Farm, Shoreham, VT
Cyndee Stusiak, Granite Bay, CA
Laura Dison and Sylvia Ganier, Green Door Gourmet, Nashville, TN
Jenny Taylor, Jubilee Flower Farm, Havana, FL
Renee Thompson, Hurrah Flowers, Grants Pass, OR
Eileen Tongson, Farmgal Flowers, Orlando, FL
Mara Tyler, Lincoln University, PA
Casandra Van Nest, Ypsilanti, MI
Cathy Washbush, Flower Time by Two, Seymour, IN
Dave Weeks, La Casa Verde Produce, Cedar, MI
Sharon Wells, Sweethaven Farm, Ashfield, MA
Rickie White, Hurdle Mills, NC
Tobie Whitman, Little Acre Flowers, Washington, DC
Pressly Williams, Renfrow Farm, Matthews, NC
Karen Wilson, Franklin, TN
Ben Wolbach, Skinny Dip Farm, Little Compton, RI
Karin Woodward, Haute Horticulture, Arlington, TN
Jennifer K. Zapadka, Rose Girl, Ltd., Casstown, OH

Call for Mentors!

The ASCFG is launching a new and exciting program in the coming year! We're developing a formal mentorship program to match our more experienced members with newer members just getting started with their flower farming endeavors. It's a great way to give back to our community and create lasting, rewarding relationships with the next generation of flower farmers. While the program is set to officially launch in the fall, we want to begin gathering a list of mentors now. Mentors will be matched with a newer grower for two years, to communicate via email and phone, and ideally visit each other's farms at least once, sharing experiences and building a supportive relationship. Matches will be made based on location and shared business models. Mentors will be compensated for their time. Interested? Contact the ASCFG at mail@ascfg.org.

Are You Up to the Task?

Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation's compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain loving one another. *Erma Bombeck*

Writing for *The Cut Flower Quarterly.* Planning and organizing national and regional meetings. Creating new programs and services for ASCFG members. These tasks and many more are accomplished by a volunteer Board of Directors. If you're grateful for the time and energy past Boards have donated to the ASCFG, help lighten the burden, and contribute by serving on the Board.

This summer you'll have the chance to run for ASCFG President or Vice-president (to serve three years), and Director for the West and Northwest Region (to serve three years). According to the bylaws, candidates for President must have previously served on the Board.

For much more information and background, contact the ASCFG office. We'll be happy to fill you in!

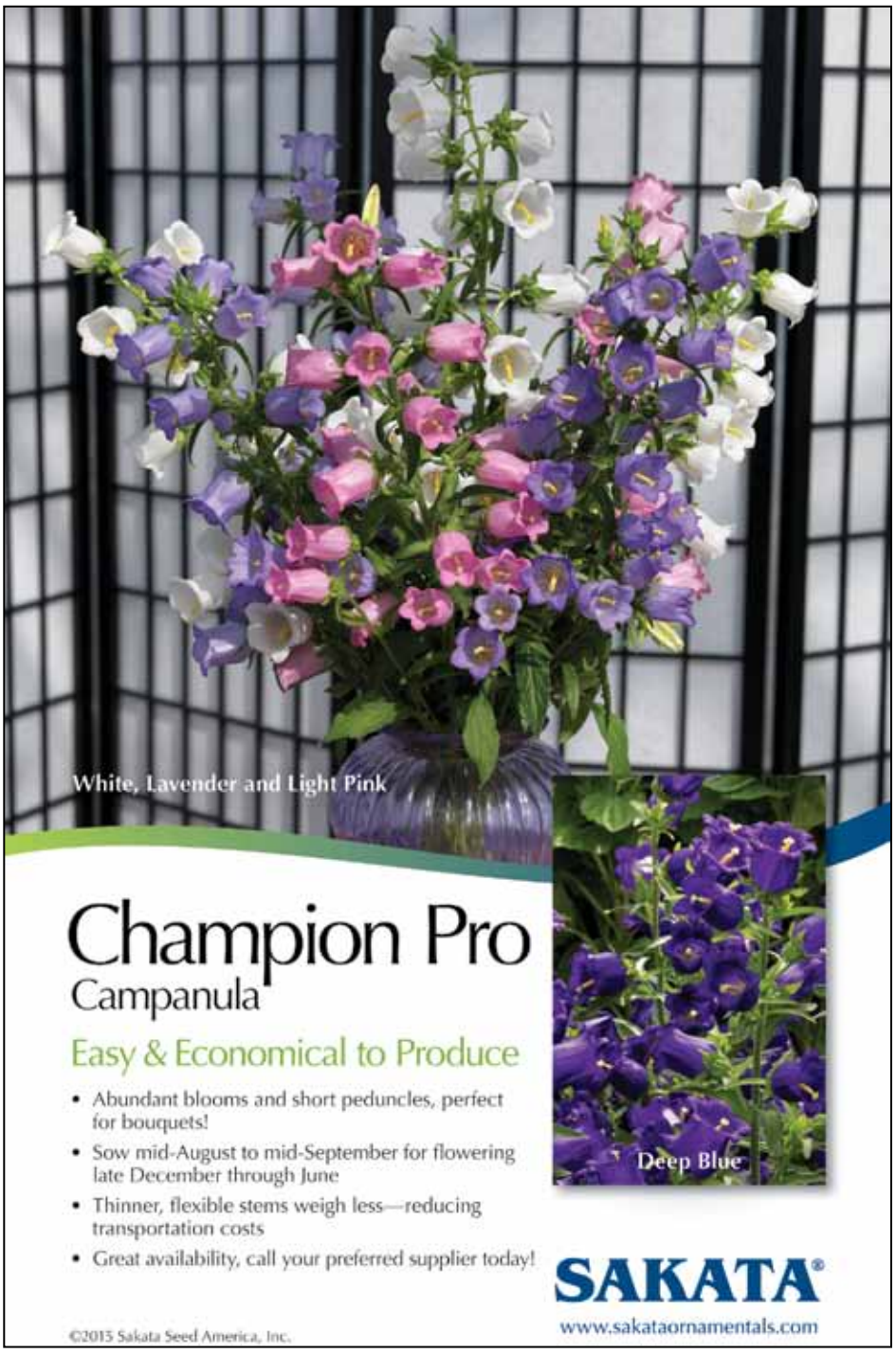
Thanks for the Good Word

You connected some of our new members to the ASCFG!

Cassie Plummer
Gretel Adams
Frank Arnosky
Nellie Ashmore
Maureen Azize
Lynn Byczynski
Leah Cook
Angela DeFelice
Linda Doan
Diana Doll
Ellen Frost
Polly Hutchison
Cathy Jones
Ella King
Ko Klaver
Barbara Lamborne
Lennie Larkin
Andrew Lee
Jennie Love
Foxie Morgan
Mandy O'Shea
Monika Roth
Mary Ellen Sherfey
Brenda Smith
Tina Smith
Kate Sparks
Doug Trott
Chris Wien
Lisa Ziegler

Special thanks go to those who so contributed their time, effort, and talents to the Spring Grower Intensives in Athens and San Jose. These meetings could not happen without their generous participation.

Rita Anders
Frank Arnosky
Christof Bernau
Alicain Carlson
Tanis Clifton
Continental Floral Greens
Davis Floral
Mimo Davis
Elizabeth Dean
John Dole
Diana Doll
Golden State Bulb Growers
Peter Hartel
Headstart Nursery
Tom Heston
Charles Hendrick
Travis Hootman
Kitayama Brothers
Lennie Larkin
Jennie Love
Donna Mills
Paula Rice
Diana Roy
Rita Jo Shoultz
Joan Thorndike
3 Porch Farm
Tom Wikstrom
Woodland Gardens
Alexa Wright


White, Lavender and Light Pink
Champion Pro
Campanula
Easy & Economical to Produce
• Abundant blooms and short peduncles, perfect for bouquets!
• Sow mid-August to mid-September for flowering late December through June
• Thinner, flexible stems weigh less—reducing transportation costs
• Great availability, call your preferred supplier today!
Deep Blue
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©2013 Sakata Seed America, Inc.

Looking for Employees or Interns?

Now is the time to find the best help for your cut flower farm.

Online classified ads are free for ASCFG members. Check out the "Classified" page under the Resources tab at www.ascfg.org. Whether you are hiring paid employees, or offering on-farm experience to interns interested in a cut flower career themselves, send the text of your ad to us at mail@ascfg.org and we'll post it for you!

Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.
-- Albert Schweitzer

Judy M. Laushman

"Like keeping frogs in a wheelbarrow." is one description of a recent event, and "Innovative and spirited discussion." is another. What are we talking about here?

The spring 2015 meeting of the ASCFG Board of Directors. This lively group got together earlier this year, just prior to the March Grower Intensive in Athens, Georgia. As you've probably come to expect from your talented and creative Board, more valuable member services were the result. Here are two we're most excited about:

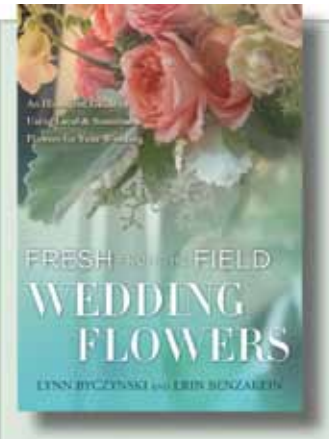
A mentor program will fill the continuing education gap between novice and experienced flower farmers, and provide the resources and opportunities for prospective growers to further develop the skills they need to farm independently and successfully. The program will be shaped largely by the interests and goals of individual participants. We'll work to match compatible growers as mentors and mentees, and help guide them through the process. We're looking first for those ASCFG members interested in serving as mentors. If you'd like to help support this program, and build the next generation of cut flower growers, please contact us.

We know that more of our members are selling online, shopping cart and all! The ASCFG is providing a grant to support individual growers, and those marketing cooperatively, to sell via the internet. The grant goes to Capital Flower Growers (CFG), a partnership of Greenstone Fields (Barbara Lamborne and Dennis Fuze) and Wollam Gardens (Bob Wollam). They are developing a software utility and the Shopify eCommerce system to permit online customer orders to be fulfilled by multiple flower growers. The custom software extracts Shopify orders into a smart spreadsheet that allows products to come from multiple farmers, generates harvest lists, consolidates product counts back into Shopify customer orders, and splits the total order revenue by farmer. Our intention is to make the software utility available to ASCFG members, complete with a pre-fab Shopify site design, product catalog, with flower photos and user documentation.

This project will be a giant step to help more growers reach more customers, and improve their efficiency, professionalism, and profit.

At the same time, Managing Director Linda Twining, ably assisted by Oberlin's only ASCFG member Laura Paxton, has been powering through back issues of *The Cut Flower Quarterly,* uploading hundreds of articles, photos, and graphics to the newly-designed, much more user-friendly AND attractive Members Only section of the ASCFG web site. You'll be able to easily search for an author or topic. With 26 years of magazines to transfer, this process won't be completed immediately; we'll let you know when you can log in. Many other features will be accessible in the Members Only section as well.

After wrapping up two successful Grower Intensives, one in Georgia and one in California, we're now looking to Virginia and Wisconsin as sites for this fall's meetings. The beauty of these shorter events is that each is different than the other, with new focuses on crop production and marketing. And with the ever-changing demographics of the ASCFG membership, the networking is endless and endlessly productive. If you haven't attended one of these meetings yet, mark your calendar for September 21-22 (Virginia) and October 5-6 (Madison, Wisconsin) and plan to learn!



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Grower Intensives

Association of
Specialty Cut Flower Growers

September 21-22
Wollam Gardens and
Greenstone Fields
Virginia

2015

October 5-6
Fair Field Flowers
Still Point Farm
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Go to www.ascfg.org for details

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